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Report

Anglicare Australia

Rental Affordability Snapshot

April 2015

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Anglicare Australia

Anglicare Australia is a network of over 40 independent local, state, national and international organisations that are linked to the Anglican Church and are joined by values of service, innovation, leadership and the Christian faith that every individual has intrinsic value. Our services are delivered to one in 40 Australians, in partnership with them, the communities in which they live, and other like-minded organisations in those areas. In all, over 12,000 staff and almost 7,500 volunteers work with over 601,000 vulnerable Australians every year delivering diverse services, in every region of Australia.

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#RentalSnapshot

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Executive Summary

Each year Anglicare Australia conducts the Rental Affordability Snapshot. Developed by the Social Action Research Centre at Anglicare Tasmania in 2007, the Snapshot was designed to highlight the lived experience of people looking for housing while in receipt of a low income. This is the sixth year it has been carried out on a national level.

Anglicare Australia believes that acquiring a secure and suitable home is a significant factor in ensuring the health, wellbeing and inclusion of individuals and their families in our community. Affordable and appropriate housing does not only provide a physical structure to house its occupants, it also enables individuals to make use of their inherent potentials to participate meaningfully in their personal and social lives, including but not limited to getting an education, engaging in the job market, caring for family members and building friendships.

Affordable housing is everybody's business. It impacts on the everyday lives of people and touches on every demographic group in our society, including children, single parents, youth, refugees and the aged. Further, it also has a negative impact on our national productivity and economy and goes against the national ethos of '*a fair go*'; that we all hold so dear. The housing crisis is too critical an issue to be overlooked and must be acted upon immediately. To this end, **Anglicare Australia advocates for a national plan for affordable housing that is supported by all levels of government.** This means a serious commitment to investment and infrastructure; guided by the social welfare sector and industry.

For the purposes of this project, a suitable rental is one which took up less than 30% of the household's income, a commonly used benchmark of affordability¹. Household incomes are derived from the maximum rate of Centrelink pensions, allowances or net minimum wage combined with the Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) and Family Tax Benefits (FTB) where applicable.

The Snapshot was undertaken on the weekend of 11 April 2015. This year, we have partnered with realestate.com.au to collect data on rental listings across Australia, replacing previous manual collection methods. A new household type has been included this year—couple family with two children living on minimum wage and parenting payment—in our Snapshot analysis to demonstrate the stress of housing unaffordability experienced by this common family type.

Nationally, over 65,600 properties were surveyed (n=65,614). The coverage of the population and geographic area is similar to previous Snapshots, with additional coverage in the southern country regions of South Australia and northern regions of New South Wales.

Despite an increase in properties available in the private rental market this year, the 2015 Snapshot highlights remarkably well that low incomes, such as government payments and the minimum wage, are insufficient to cover costs in the Australian rental market.

¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001), [Measuring Wellbeing: Frameworks for Australian Social Statistics, 2001, Canberra, cat No. 4160.0](#), viewed 12 April 2015.

The primary findings of the nationally aggregated data are:

Overall national aggregate

- Single people on government payments are seriously disadvantaged in the housing market, with less than 1% of the listed 65,614 properties rated as suitable.
- Single people on minimum wage would find 3.3% of listed properties suitable if they had two children (n=2,186) and 2.3% if they were living on their own (n=1,501).
- Couples in work fare better in the rental market, with 23.8% of properties suitable for a couple with two children on minimum wage (n=15,605). The same family composition on Newstart would have access to only 0.9% of the available listing (n=618).
- Age Pensioner couples would find 3.4% of properties suitable (n=2,239) on the Snapshot weekend.
- Couple income households with one parent on minimum wage and another on parenting payment – a new household type introduced this year – would have access to 6.9% of rental properties (n=4,501) without experiencing housing stress.

Regional aggregate

- Regional areas are too expensive for single people living on an income support payment, especially for people living on Newstart and Youth Allowance, who would have access to less than 10 suitable properties out of the 14,000 regional properties surveyed.
- Single parents on Parenting Payment would find 3.7% of rentals suitable (n=531), while single parents on Newstart would only find 0.6% of rentals suitable (n=81).
- The rental market is marginally less expensive for individuals living on a minimum wage, depending on if they are single (7.3%, n=1,047) or have children (12.5%, n=1,786).
- Couples with two children on minimum wage would have access to almost 1 in 2 regional rental properties (47.2%; n=6,733). The same family composition receiving Newstart would have access to only 3.8% of regional properties (n=548). Age Pension couples would find 11.8% of rentals suitable (n=1,683).
- A couple household with one parent on minimum wage and another on Parenting Payment – a new household type added this year – would have access to 22% of rental properties (n=3,135) in regional area without experiencing housing stress.

Metropolitan aggregate

- The cities are also too expensive for people living on low income, especially if they are on Newstart (<0.1%, n=1) and Youth Allowance (0%, n=0).
- People on Disability Support Payment could get 0.1% of the 51,357 properties (n=51). Age pensioners would be able to access 0.3% (n=155) or 1.1% (n=556), depending on if they are single or coupled.
- Parenting Payment recipients could access 17 or 12 suitable rentals out of 51,357 depending on if they have one or two children.

- People on minimum wage fare marginally better in the cities, with 0.8% of rentals suitable for a single person with two children (n=400), and 0.9% if they are single (n=454). Couples with two children would find 17.3% of rentals suitable on the Snapshot weekend (n=8,870).
- Couple income households with one parent on minimum wage and another on Parenting Payment – a new household type added this year – would have access to 2.7% of rental properties (n=1,366) in regional area without experiencing housing stress.

Together with the Snapshot, various pieces of work from Anglicare Australia have over the years demonstrated the negative impacts of the housing crisis. Examples include people having to go into debt to pay their bills, and children and parents having to go without food² because it is the only discretionary item in their budget. Our latest national search project *Being a/apart: a study into young people's experiences of belonging*³ also highlighted the importance of housing for young people leaving out-of-home care and transitioning into adulthood. To this end, Anglicare Australia is calling for a **national plan for affordable housing**, which includes the following five key priority areas:

1. Recognise income inadequacy as a barrier to secure housing and meaningful social participation

- Increase the rates of Newstart and Youth Allowance and their indexation to keep pace with living standards and housing costs.
- Undertake a review of the Commonwealth Rent Assistance and its effectiveness in protecting against the increasing costs of rent.

2. Create a tax system that makes affordable housing more available

- Redirect negative gearing towards growing the supply of affordable housing, and improving its quality.
- Review the impact of other taxes, such as stamp duties and land taxes, on housing for low income households.

3. Increase social housing stock sustainably and responsibly

- Increase social housing stock.
- Renew old stock in a timely manner so as to avoid greater costs later.
- Encourage state/territory governments to transfer title along with the asset in the transfer of social housing stock.

² NATSEM (2012), *Going Without: Financial hardship in Australia*, Anglicare Australia, Catholic Social Services, the Salvation Army and UnitingCare Australia, Canberra

³ Anglicare Australia (2014), *Being a/apart: State of the Family Report 2014*, Canberra

4. Increase housing stock that matches changing population needs

- Increase supply of affordable housing, including public, community and other low income rental properties.
- Ensure new housing stock reflects the changes in Australia's population: age, culture, single person households, fewer children per family, etc.
- Modify and design housing to account for the needs of people, as they age or live with disability.

5. Federal Government to take national leadership and work in collaboration with the community sector

- Recommit to independent expertise and impartial advice on housing supply and homelessness strategies.
- Sustain housing incentive schemes over the long term to allow investors, including superannuation funds, to commit the necessary funds.
- Gain Commonwealth acceptance of its leadership role in terms of coordinating and pursuing a cohesive national housing strategy.

Introduction

Home ownership has for a long time been a part of the Australian way of life. Each year, the housing crisis moves home ownership further out of reach for many households. With more would-be home owners unable to afford to buy forced into the rental market and the downward pressure this applies, affordable housing is an issue that none of us can afford to ignore.

The Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot (the Snapshot) is an annual project surveying the affordability of rental properties for people living on a low income in Australia.

Developed by the Social Action Research Centre at Anglicare Tasmania in 2007, the Snapshot was designed to highlight the lived experience of people looking for housing while in receipt of a low income. This is the sixth year that the Rental Affordability Snapshot has been undertaken at a national level.

The level to which everyday Australians are impacted by the affordable housing crisis in Australia will vary but make no mistake, it is not only those shut out of the housing market, like those represented by this Rental Affordability Snapshot, who are impacted. Our national economy and the stitching of our social fabric are shaped in part by unaffordable housing and in that way, we all bear the brunt.

The annual Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot does however, focus on those households which are the hardest hit by unaffordable housing and the thing that draws them all together is the difficulty they face in obtaining housing in the private rental market.

Not only is a limited income an indication that obtaining adequate housing will be a challenge, but some people in our society also have additional difficulties on top of that. Particularly, older people renting on their own, people living with disability which invokes utility as well as affordability concerns, women escaping violence, young people living on very low incomes, people living with mental health concerns. In the talk of unaffordable housing and how difficult that is, sometimes the difficulties faced in addition to, and which are often exacerbated by unaffordable housing are overlooked.

It is a strained environment, the housing sector at the moment. With a number of forces acting in different directions it is difficult to make policy headway. With the current policy debate around whether the Federal Government should be at the housing policy table; tax debates and the attempted inclusion of housing as infrastructure rather than a welfare issue; potential defunding and disbanding of housing advocates and other policy voices; a short term view of housing and homelessness agreements and increasing demand on housing and homelessness support services have created a turbulent and uncertain space in which to address a national crisis.

Throughout this report there are personal stories and quotes from Anglicare Australia's other work in housing affordability to highlight the lived experience of unaffordable housing and to amplify the voices of those who are most affected by it.

Methodology

For the purposes of this project, an affordable rental is one that takes up less than 30% of the household's income, a commonly used benchmark of affordability for people living on low income.

Household incomes are derived from the maximum rate of Centrelink pensions, allowances or net minimum wage combined with the Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) and Family Tax Benefits (FTB) where applicable. The total resulting income for each household type was used to establish a maximum affordable weekly rent based on the 30% rule.

The Snapshot was undertaken over the weekend of 11 April 2015. This year, Anglicare Australia has partnered with realestate.com.au to collect data on rental listings across Australia, replacing previous manual collection methods. In addition to the rental data from realestate.com.au, some Anglicare Australia network members have also audited locally based real estate websites and/ or local newspapers for rental accommodation. Nationally, over 65,600 properties were surveyed (n=65,614). Predefined tests of affordability and appropriateness were applied to the survey data, resulting in the number of advertised properties on a given day which were adequate for households of different types living on a low income. For a dwelling to be determined as suitable it must satisfy tests of both affordability and appropriateness. Assumptions underlying the tests of affordability and appropriateness can be found at Appendix 1.

A new household type has been included this year (household type #14)—couple family with two children living on minimum wage and parenting payment. This inclusion demonstrates the stress of housing unaffordability experienced by this common family structure. We have also updated the income level of household type #11 – couple with two children on minimum wage—to reflect an accurate disposable income level of these families. The increase in household income has contributed to an improvement of housing affordability for these households.

A Note on Commonwealth Rental Assistance:

CRA has both a minimum (cut-in) point and a maximum (cut-out) point for each household type. Where the advertised weekly rent falls between the cut-in and cut-out points, the proportion of CRA is calculated as a proportion of the amount paid in rent. Where the weekly rent falls above the cut-out point, the maximum rate is applied irrespective of how far above the cut-out point the weekly rent happens to be. As rents increase the CRA becomes less effective as a means of affordability.

What is the 30:40 housing stress measure?

The commonly used benchmark of housing affordability is the '30:40 indicator'⁴. That is, it is determined that when housing costs are greater than 30% of disposable income and that household's income is in the bottom 40% of the income distribution, the household is deemed to be in 'housing stress'⁵.

In measuring housing affordability using this indicator, housing costs generally include rent, mortgage payments, rates, taxes, household insurance, repairs and maintenance, as well as interest payments on loans for

⁴ Lovering, Matthew (2014), Housing affordability stress: Understanding the 30:40 indicator, Evidence Review 54, AHURI.

⁵ Harding, A., Phillips, B., & Kelly, S (2004), *Trends in Housing Stress*, NATSEM, Paper Presented at the National Summit on Housing Affordability, Canberra

alterations and levies on strata-titled dwellings⁶. Household income is calculated by looking at gross income (pre-tax income), disposable income (post-tax income) or equivalised disposable income (after-tax income adjusted for the number and ages of people in the household)⁷.

The Rental Affordability Snapshot adopts a simplified model of the 30:40 indicator, and includes only rent as housing cost. Net income is used, taking into account maximum rate of Centrelink pensions, allowances or net minimum wage combined with the Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) and Family Tax Benefits (FTB) where applicable.

While using the 30:40 indicator provides policy-makers with a useful tool to assess how housing cost burdens have changed over time⁸, as with any measure of affordability, there are weaknesses with this housing stress measure.⁹ For instance, it doesn't take into account the shift in household make up in Australia when assessing housing affordability in a broader sense. Anglicare Australia has developed safeguards, where possible, to minimise the distortions created from inconsistent treatment of these concepts.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute—from its National Research Venture 3 into housing affordability—found that the 30:40 measure (or the Ratio method) was a reasonable indicator of housing stress and was useful in identifying “households likely to be at risk of problems associated with a lack of affordable housing”¹⁰. The Ratio method underpins the Housing Affordability Index offered by the HIA and Commonwealth Investment Bank¹¹ and the Council of Australian Governments also uses the Ratio method in the National Affordable Housing Agreement as its measure of affordability¹².

Is 30% enough?

When a household income is upwards of \$150,000, 30% or greater of that income might be enough to obtain a suitable dwelling with adequate access to services and amenities as required without placing the household under any kind of stress. However, when the household income is at or below the minimum wage (\$640.90 per 38 hour week before tax or \$33,326 per annum)¹³, options are limited and a reasonable place to live often comes at a much higher price.

The Ratio method, which has been used in the Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot, is a broad brush approach to affordability that does not take into account the nuances of individual households. Though focussing on the lived experience of searching for suitable housing, the Snapshot does not seek to understand the individual experiences of households. The strength of the Ratio method is that it provides an indicator at a particular point in time (a snapshot) of unaffordability, and over longer periods, of the extent to which affordability shifts.

⁶ Lovering, Matthew (2014), Housing affordability stress: Understanding the 30:40 indicator, Evidence Review 54, AHURI.

⁷ *ibid*

⁸ *ibid*

⁹ Henman, P & Jones, A. (2010), *Exploring the use of residual measures of housing affordability in Australia: methodologies and concepts*. Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute: Melbourne.

¹⁰ AHURI (2010), National Research Venture 3 into housing affordability, AHURI Final Report No. 105

¹¹ HIA, n.d, *HIA-CBA Affordability Index and Report*, viewed 15 April 2015.

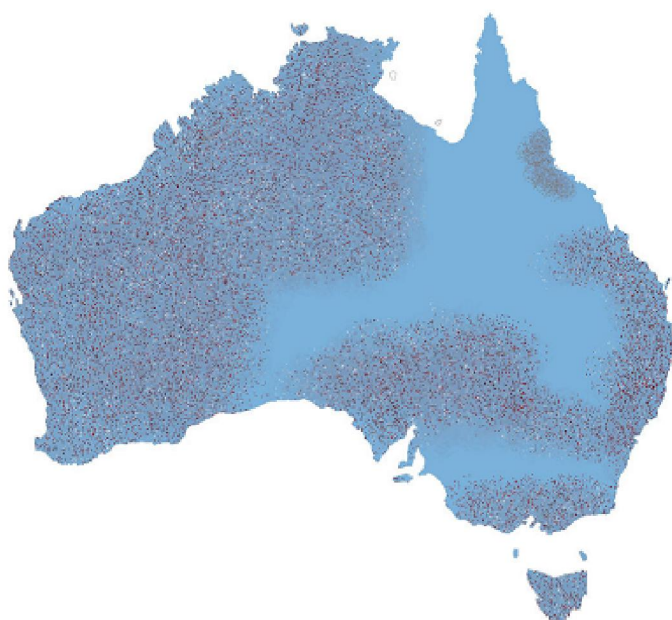
¹² COAG Reform Council (2011), *National Affordable Housing Agreement: Performance report for 2009–10*, COAG Reform Council, Sydney.

¹³ Fair Work Ombudsman, 2014, Minimum Wages, Fair Work Ombudsman, Canberra accessed 28 April 2015, <http://www.fairwork.gov.au/ArticleDocuments/723/Minimum-wages.pdf.aspx>

Findings

Detailed findings for each locality can be found in the section *Locality Snapshot* from p.38 of this report. What follows is an overarching description of the common findings across jurisdictions for people living on low incomes.

National catchment



Indicative national coverage of rental affordability snapshot 2015

Overall there was an increase in the number of properties surveyed compared to last year but the growth was not consistent across all jurisdictions, highlighting the different rates of economic development and demand for labour in different parts of Australia. The geographic area covered by the Snapshot this year was largely similar to last year, with additional coverage in the southern country regions of SA, and northern regions of NSW.

In total 65,637 properties were assessed on the collection day as either appropriate or affordable for households living on low incomes. The Snapshot looks at 14 household types (one more than previous years) of varying composition and payment type and is conducted in both regional and metropolitan areas. For a property to be considered suitable for any of the household types, both tests must be satisfied (i.e. suitable = affordable and appropriate). Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the suitability of properties listed on the day of the Snapshot for each of the 14 household types. It should be noted that these are aggregate figures and are not distributed evenly across the Snapshot catchment areas. It does not follow, for example, that a person living in rural South Australia will have the same chance to access a suitable property as would a person in either a similar regional area or a metropolitan area. For detailed figures on individual catchment areas, please see the relevant locality Snapshot.

Table 1: Number and proportion of suitable property listings: National aggregate

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	618	0.9%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	165	0.3%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	2,239	3.4%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	548	0.8%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	84	0.1%
6	Single	Age Pension	593	0.9%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	317	0.5%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	10	<0.1%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	8	<0.1%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	8	<0.1%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	15,605	23.8%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	2,186	3.3%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	1,501	2.3%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	4,501	6.9%
Total No of Properties		65,614		

Single income households

Less than 1% of the listed properties were rated as suitable for any of the single households in receipt of a government payment. Singles living on an Age Pension (**#6**) or the Disability Support Pension (**#7**) could afford 0.9% and 0.5% of the total properties, equating to 593 and 317 dwellings respectively. Singles living on Newstart (**#8**) and Youth Allowance (**#9 or #10**) however could only afford 10 and 8 respectively of the 65,614 properties listed in the national Snapshot catchment area. As these figures do not equate to a percentage at one decimal point, it will be hereafter described as <0.1%. Despite the higher level of the pensions over the allowances, affordable rentals were extremely limited for a single person living on any government payment.

Singles with children would also struggle to find suitable accommodation had they been looking on the day of the Snapshot. A single person with two children and living on the minimum wage (**#12**) would have access to 3.3% of the listed rentals (n=2,186), while the same family if in relying on the Parenting Payment Single (**#2**) would have access to only 0.3% of the listings (n=165).

The two household types that include a single parent and a child are some of the hardest hit. These two households are differentiated by the age of their child and subsequently the payment type: one has a five year old child and is in receipt of the Parenting Payment (**#4**); the other has an eight year old child and is in receipt of Newstart Allowance (**#5**). Respectively the availability of suitable rentals is 0.8% (n=548) and 0.1% (n=84).

Singles on a minimum wage (**#13**) could find 1,501 suitable rentals, equating to 2.3% of the total private rentals on the day.

Double income households

Households with dual incomes naturally fare better in this Snapshot. However, there is clear demarcation between those living on the minimum wage and those in receipt of income support payments. Of the four *couple households*, three include children. The Family Tax Benefit payments associated with having children in a household do not seem to be an indicator of a greater share of suitable properties at the aggregate level.

The double income households with the greatest proportion of suitable listings are households with two children living on the minimum wage (**#11**) at 23.8%¹⁴ (n=15,605), and households with two children living on minimum wage and parenting payment (**#14**)—a new household type in the Snapshot—at 6.9% (n=4,501).

At the other end of the Snapshot income scale, the same family composition in receipt of Newstart (**#1**) would have access to only 0.9% of the available listings (n=618). A couple living on the Age Pension (**#3**) would have access to 3.4% or 2,239 properties of the listed 65,614 private rentals.

Regional catchment

The 2015 Snapshot took into account the greatest portion of rural and regional areas to date, with additional coverage in the southern country regions of SA, and northern regions of NSW.

Generally, Australia is codified into five different scales of remoteness: Metropolitan (least remote), Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote, and Very Remote¹⁵. Similar to the method used by the COAG Reform Council, Anglicare Australia has used a rough 'balance of state' approach to determine regional and metropolitan areas. Hence, Regional refers to the four ABS categories which include regional and remote descriptions. Generally, the areas covered in the regional areas have between 10,000 to 100,000 inhabitants, except in those areas which are very remote¹⁶. According to the ABS approximately 30% (30.8%) of Australia's population lives in regional areas. Those properties counted in the regional areas of the Rental Affordability Snapshot equates to 22% of the total collection, which keeps in line with the proportional breakdown of metropolitan and regional population distribution, noting variations do exist from year to year¹⁷.

¹⁴ The calculation of this household type has been updated to reflect a more accurate income level, which resulted in an increase of around \$40 in maximum affordable rent per week compared to the previous calculation. This increase in household income has contributed to an improvement of housing affordability for these households.

¹⁵ ABS (2012), [Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2011](#), viewed 23 April, 2015.

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ some changes in the data are attributed to the redefining of boundaries to align with the Australian Standard Geographical Classification

Table 2: Number and proportion of suitable property listings: Regional aggregate

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	548	3.8%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	153	1.1%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	1,683	11.8%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	531	3.7%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	81	0.6%
6	Single	Age Pension	438	3.1%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	266	1.9%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	9	<0.1%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	8	<0.1%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	8	0.1%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	6,733	47.2%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	1,786	12.5%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	1,047	7.3%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	3,135	22.0%
Total No of Properties		14,257		

Single income households

Single people in regional areas are hard hit by housing unaffordability. Regional areas generally have fewer services and higher unemployment rates, raising the dilemma of “if you can afford to live there, there are no jobs and if there are jobs, you can’t afford to live there!”

Of the 14,257 regional properties analysed on the collection day, those that would be suitable for a single person with no children living on income support ranged from <0.1% for singles on Newstart (**#8**) and Youth Allowance (**#9 or #10**) (n=9 & 8), increasing to 0.6% (n=81) for a single parent on Newstart (**#5**), 1.9% (n=266) for a person with a disability (**#7**), to 3.1% (n=438) for an age pensioner (**#6**).

Singles living on the Parenting Payment with one child (**#4**) could access 3.7 % of rentals (n=531), while those on the same payment with two children (**#2**) could access 1.1% (n=153).

Singles living on the minimum wage might apply for 1,047 properties (7.3%) if on their own (**#13**) or 1,786 properties (12.5%) if they have two children (**#12**).

Double income households

A couple living in regional area with two children on the minimum wage (**#11**) might access 47.2% of all rentals (n=6,733)¹⁸. However, the same family living on Newstart (**#1**) might only access 3.8% (n=548).

An Age Pension couple (**#3**) could afford 11.8% (n=1,683) of the 14,257 properties.

Couple households living with two children on minimum wage and parenting payment (**#14**) might access 22% of the rentals (n=3,135).

Metropolitan catchment

Metropolitan areas have seen the greatest population growth over the last decade with the bulk of that growth occurring in the inner cities and outer suburbs. Growth has also occurred along urban infill areas and coastal regions, adding extra pressure on housing supply. A decline has been experienced in inland rural areas and long-established suburbs within capital cities¹⁹. As of June 2014, metropolitan areas account for around two-thirds of Australia's population, with 15.6 million people living in Greater Capital Cities. The combined population of Greater Capital Cities increased by 289,000 people in the 12 months to 2014²⁰.

Table 3 below provides the breakdown of results for all 51,357 metropolitan properties Surveyed.

¹⁸ The calculation of this household type has been updated to reflect a more accurate income level, which resulted in an increase of around \$40 in maximum affordable rent per week compared to the previous calculation. This increase in household income has contributed to an improvement of housing affordability for these households.

¹⁹ ABS (2015), [Regional Population Growth, Australia, 2013-14](#), catalogue no. 3218.0

²⁰ *ibid*

Table 3: Number and proportion of suitable property listings: Metropolitan aggregate

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	70	0.1%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	12	<0.1%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	556	1.1%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	17	<0.1%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	3	<0.1%
6	Single	Age Pension	155	0.3%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	51	0.1%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	1	<0.1%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	8,870	17.3%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	400	0.8%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	454	0.9%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	1,366	2.7%
Total No of Properties		51,357		

Single income households

Given the increasing pressure on our cities, people living on a low income have very little chance of living in an employment rich urban environment without being under extreme housing stress. As can be seen from Table 3, none of the single income households on government payments would have access to more than 1% of the total available properties listed in the catchment areas on collection day.

There were hardly any rentals suitable for singles with children living on pensions, which is a deterioration²¹ from last year's finding. For a single household with one child living on Newstart Allowance (**#5**), only 3 out of 51,357

²¹ In RAS 2014, in metro areas, singles with one child living on Newstart Allowance would be able to access 0.1% of rentals (n=34). Singles with one child living on parenting payment would be able to access 0.4% of rentals (n=173). Singles with two children on parenting payment would be able to access 0.5% (n=216) rentals.

rentals would be suitable and available. The same household composition living on a parenting payment (**#4**) would do slightly better with 17 suitable properties for rent on the Snapshot day. A single parent with two children (**#2**) living on parenting payment could access 12 private rentals.

For singles living on the Newstart (**#8**) and Youth Allowance (**#9 or #10**), almost nothing is available in the metropolitan areas that would be suitable (n=1, n=0).

Singles living on an Age Pension (**#6**) or the Disability Support Pension (**#7**) would be able to afford 0.3% and 0.1% of the total metro properties equating to 155 and 51 dwellings respectively. Singles living on the minimum wage might apply for 454 properties (0.9%) if on their own (**#13**) or 400 properties if they have two children (**#12**).

Double income households

A couple living in metropolitan area with two children on the minimum wage (**#11**) might access 17.3% of all rentals (n=8,870)²². However, the same family living on Newstart (**#1**) might only access 0.1% (n=70).

An Age Pension couple (**#3**) could afford 1.1% (n=556) of the 51,357 properties.

Couple households living with two children on minimum wage and parenting payment (**#14**) might access 2.7% of the rentals (n=1,366).

²² The calculation of this household type has been updated to reflect a more accurate income level, which resulted in an increase of around \$40 in maximum affordable rent per week compared to the previous calculation. This increase in household income has contributed to an improvement of housing affordability for these households.

What is housing stress?

Housing stress indicates the level of stress households experience when they spend too much of their income on housing costs, leaving little disposable income for other necessities.

For households that have an income level in the bottom 40 % of Australia's income distribution, they would experience **moderate housing stress** if they are spending more than 30% of gross household income on housing costs.

Those spending more than 50% of gross household income on housing costs experience **severe housing stress** – a situation that is very hard to turn around without adequate support and an improvement in the unaffordable housing market.

[Source: Housing Assistance in Australia 2013, Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#)

Discussion & Policy Goals

Affordable housing is everyone's business

Every year, Anglicare Australia asks our members across the country what they consider the top priorities in overcoming disadvantage for their clients and our society. For three years in a row, the *lack of affordable housing* came up as a major concern. This is irrespective of members' service locations: regional or metro; the service types they provide, for instance, aged care, family support, out-of-home-care, housing support; or the population groups—youth, seniors, single parents, to name just a few—that they serve and support on a daily basis²³.

The impact of unaffordable housing touches not only those experiencing housing stress. A survey released by the Property Council of Australia—*My City: The People's Verdict 2013*²⁴—revealed that only 36% of people think the Australian cities they live in have affordable housing. It is an issue of priority concern, but it was the worst performing aspect out of 17 liveability measures that the survey assessed.

These perceptions have been confirmed by official figures. According to ABS²⁵, an increasing number of Australian households are finding themselves in housing stress. The number of households in moderate housing stress has increased by 78% from just over 900,000 in 1994-95 to nearly 1,600,000 in 2011-12. Over the same period, the number of households in severe housing stress increased by 67% from 300,000 to nearly 500,000.

The situation for people living on low income is particularly bleak. In 2011-12, more than half (54%) of the lower income households in the private rental market were in housing stress²⁶. A recent report published by the Productivity Commission²⁷ indicates that housing stress now impacts 40.7% of low income renting households (those in the bottom 40%), up more than 5% in the past seven years. The proportion of lower income households that are renting has also been increasing over time, from 32% in 2007-08 to 34% in 2011-12²⁸, signifying a worsening private rental market for people living on low income if nothing is to be done to reverse the trend.

Evidenced by network members and staff across the country, and the advocacy work we have done over the years, Anglicare Australia firmly believes that acquiring a secure and suitable home is a significant factor in ensuring the health, wellbeing, and inclusion of individuals and their families in our community. A secure home, together with employment and health are

²³ Anglicare Australia (2012, 2013, 2014). *The Review*, Anglicare Australia, Canberra.

²⁴ Wyatt, Nick (2014). *My City: The People's Verdict 2013*, a report prepared for the Property Council of Australia.

²⁵ ABS (2013), *Housing occupancy and costs, 2011–12*, ABS cat. no. 4130.0. Canberra: ABS.

²⁶ *ibid*

²⁷ Productivity Commission Report on Government Services ()

²⁸ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2013), *Housing assistance in Australia 2013*. Cat. no. HOU 271. Canberra: AIHW.

three imperatives that allow individuals to participate meaningfully in society.

Impact on the nation

Those who have already acquired a secure home may think that the housing affordability crisis has little impact on their wellbeing. However, evidence continues to illustrate how housing unaffordability could adversely impact our economy, national productivity and communal wellbeing.

Firstly, a more affordable rental market, especially in the city centres, would benefit business across Australia. For instance, for industries competing on low margins and dependent on a low-paid, flexible, casual workforce, addressing the problem of housing unaffordability may result in lower training and administration costs due to a reduction of labour turnover rates²⁹. It would also make it less challenging for employers to recruit low-paid positions and avoid higher wages to offset high housing or expensive commuting costs³⁰. Prices of services and projects would therefore stay competitive, which would benefit both employers and consumers.

Furthermore, Australia as a whole will benefit from housing affordability as the spatial mismatch of affordable housing and job opportunities may weaken or even destroy the benefits that come from communities that have a social and employment mix³¹. A good mix of skill sets is important for globally competitive production at the central core of our big cities. If housing unaffordability is not adequately addressed, regional and national economies would be affected by lost growth, unresponsive labour markets and increased welfare costs. To this end, improving housing affordability could restore the core value of egalitarianism that has bound us all together as a nation, with people from different walks of life, skill sets and backgrounds all given an opportunity to fulfil their potential in contributing to the community and the nation.

Affordable housing is everybody's business. It impacts on the everyday lives of people and touches on every demographic group in our society, including children, single parents, youth, refugees and the aged. Further, it also has a negative impact on our national productivity and economy and goes against the value of *having a fair go* that we all hold so dear. The housing crisis is too critical an issue to be overlooked and must be acted upon immediately.

What family life? Impact on households living on low incomes

Housing unaffordability affects everyone. But for people living on low incomes it is a constant struggle. The longer they are limited by the cycle of living on low incomes, the harder it is for them to extricate themselves from their circumstances. As a result households – and that means families and individuals – become further entrenched in ongoing poverty, isolation and disadvantage.

Without proper intervention and support, people living on very low incomes for a prolonged period of time may face complex consequences that are often difficult to turn around. What this means for them is that they are forced to the edges of our society with little hope of ever transitioning permanently to the core, as Brian Howe³², former deputy Prime Minister called it. Little by little, the fabric that holds their lives together begins to unravel and it can take only one unexpected expense or event to entrench people into disadvantage, perhaps for the next and even subsequent generations.

²⁹ Senate Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia (2008), *A good house is hard to find: Housing affordability in Australia*, Senate printing unit, Canberra

³⁰ *ibid*

³¹ *ibid*

³² Address by Brian Howe, AO Chair of the Independent Inquiry into Insecure work in Australia to the National Press Club, 18 April 2012.

Struggle for individuals

Everyone needs and deserves a suitable home, but it is those who are living on the edge of our society that are most directly impacted by the unaffordable housing market. With little income to fall back on, these individuals and their families struggle to put a roof over their heads. When they do, they pay a considerable proportion of their income on rents, leaving even less income for other necessities such as food, bills and transportation. All it takes is a small financial upset, such as an emergency trip to the doctor or a car breakdown for them to spiral further into poverty and disadvantage. This is precisely the key finding from the report commissioned by Anglicare Australia from the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling (NATSEM) *Going without: Financial hardship in Australia*. It was found that households living on low incomes do not have enough money to cover basic necessities. It was estimated that people on Newstart Allowance or job seeker Youth Allowance spent on average 21% in excess of their income, with up to 64% of their total income spent on basics including housing³³.

Other pieces of work carried out by the Anglicare network also demonstrated the intractability of housing stress. The most notable is the Food Insecurity Project—*When there's not enough to eat*—that provides telling evidence of the impacts of housing unaffordability and its lingering effects on individuals and their families. The research shows that of those low-income households living in private rentals, the vast majority (94%) were in rental stress. In order to ensure that rent and other bills were paid, food often became one of the few discretionary items in the household budget, meaning families and sometimes even children had to go without food. While in most cases in the survey children were protected from days entirely without food, they nevertheless missed out on school events and friendship activities, and reported shame, embarrassment and ill health. Adults too also reported significant impacts including depression, resentment, embarrassment, isolation and anger³⁴.

Another research project undertaken by the Anglicare network—*Being a/part: a study into young people's experiences of belonging and support*³⁵—shed light on the importance of access to accommodation for young people leaving care. Many young people leaving care face the prospect of homelessness and experience homelessness after they leave care. If we invest properly in these young people as they transition into independence, not only could we reduce the financial resources they require later in life particularly in areas such as health, mental health, housing and legal support³⁶, young people will also be better equipped to participate socially and economically in the long term.

For the rest of this section, we will focus on some of the most vulnerable population groups that are most prone to the detrimental effects of the unaffordable rental market.

As the Federation White paper on housing and homelessness³⁷ rightly pointed out, some groups including Indigenous Australians, older people, young people, and people with mental illness or disability are more likely than others to experience difficulty securing stable and affordable housing. This is complicated when individuals face multiple disadvantages and interact with multiple service systems.

Personal stories and quotes from Anglicare Australia's other work around housing affordability are also showcased below to demonstrate the lived experience of having to manage on insecure living situations and

³³ NATSEM (2012), *Going Without: Financial hardship in Australia*, Anglicare Australia, Catholic Social Services, the Salvation Army and UnitingCare Australia, Canberra

³⁴ Anglicare Australia (2012), *When there's not enough to eat: State of the Family Report 2012*, Canberra

³⁵ Anglicare Australia (2014), *Being a/part: State of the Family Report 2014*, Canberra

³⁶ *ibid*, p.45.

³⁷ White Paper on Reform of the Federation (2014), *Roles and Responsibilities in Housing and Homelessness Issue Paper 2*, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra.

very low incomes. These personal stories also aim to amplify the voices of those most affected by housing unaffordability.

Women and homelessness

Ageing single women

Older, single women are currently one of the most disadvantaged population groups in Australia due to a range of reasons including time spent out of workforce, caring responsibilities, the pay gap compared to their male counterparts, less superannuation and expensive rental prices³⁸.

According to the Equal Rights Alliance³⁹, of those Australians who are single, over 45, earn less than the median wage and do not own their own home, 62% are women. With less disposable income earned over a lifetime compared to men, fewer women are able to own property, which means when they grow older, they lose the security that comes with owning your own home. Indeed, many women still live in homes owned by their partner, and find themselves homeless following a relationship breakdown. According to Housing for the Aged, approximately 70% of those seeking its services are women, most of whom are living in poverty precisely because of breakdown of their relationships⁴⁰. Furthermore, the death of an income earning spouse, poor health or serious illness, as well as discrimination in the housing market also make older single women particularly susceptible to housing stress⁴¹.

Domestic violence and homelessness

The prevalence of poverty and homelessness among women is even more troubling when it is compounded by instances of domestic and family violence. When presented with a threat to their safety, women (and their children) often have little choice and are forced to leave their home. However the lack of affordable housing options decreases the likelihood of women successfully leaving violent relationships. Subsequently, this contributes to the high level of homelessness among women who have experienced violence⁴². Indeed, domestic and family violence is the number one reason why people present to specialist homeless services, with 55% female clients citing this as the reason; a total of 25% of all clients⁴³.

While the National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and their Children (National Plan) has identified NRAS and other areas of Federal housing policy as vehicles to ensure 'strong links that exist between the National Plan and other significant COAG Reforms'⁴⁴, the abolition of National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) and the uncertain role of the Federal Government in housing may mean stagnation on this front⁴⁵.

³⁸ Osborne-Crowley, Lucia (2015), "[Homelessness and Older Women: The accumulation of a lifetime of inequality](#)", *Women's Agenda*, accessed on 15 April 2015

³⁹ Equality Rights Alliance (2015), [Pre-Budget Submission of the Equality Rights Alliance](#), accessed on 15th April 2015

⁴⁰ Housing for the Aged Action Group, taken from Osborne-Crowley, Lucia (2015), "Homelessness and Older Women: The accumulation of a lifetime of inequality", *Women's Agenda*, accessed on 15 April 2015

⁴¹ Homelessness Australia (2013), [Homelessness and Women fact sheet](#), Homelessness Australia.

⁴² *ibid*

⁴³ *ibid*

⁴⁴ Department of Social Services (2011), *National Plan to Reduce Violence Against Women and Their Children*, Australian Government, Canberra.

⁴⁵ Equality Rights Alliance (2015), [Pre-Budget Submission of the Equality Rights Alliance](#), accessed on 15th April 2015

Older Australians and housing stress

A desire to age at home

Australia has an ageing population. The latest Intergenerational Report⁴⁶ shows that the number of Australians aged over 65 is projected to more than double by 2055, with 1 in 1,000 people projected to live over 100. While technological and medical advancement means that people could live healthier and longer lives in the future, it doesn't follow that everyone who lives for a long time could have a good quality of life, especially in their final years.

Research by think tank Per Capita⁴⁷ argued that the current housing policies for the ageing population have not been successful due to a predominantly 'rational' and 'financially sound' approach which does not account for the psychological relationship between ageing and the home. For many older Australians, the home means much more than just a space to live and rest. A home for them may be a repository of history and memories that is worth holding on to. The home can also provide a sense of independence and of managing uncertainty which has a positive effect on the health of the ageing individual⁴⁸. It is therefore unhelpful when the public policy is based only on 'the presumption of 'good information, clear preferences and rational decision-making'⁴⁹, and prioritises the effective use of housing stock above other non-financial attributes such as memories and attachment to the home and neighbourhood. To this end, financial incentives and rational arguments alone may not encourage older people to downsize and make more 'efficient use' of existing housing stock.

Older non-home owners and housing stress

While ageing is inevitable, it is that inevitability which drives many home-owners to consider asset-management in relation to their future capabilities and health levels. That is, many have some idea as to when and how they might be prepared to down-size their home or look to other financing arrangements to support their future care. For older Australians who live on low incomes and who are not home-owners the outlook can be very different. With the aged care and pensions systems that are in effect designed for home owners, the poverty rate after housing costs have been deducted is higher for non-house-owning households. These are households which are predominantly depending on the private rental market or the social housing system for accommodation. Low incomes limit this cohort's choice of suitable homes irrespective of competing on other grounds in a tight rental market. The lack of income also means a reduced capacity to seek home maintenance and modification services to adapt their homes to their ageing needs. While those who have used these services feel more independent and safer in their homes, and in turn have better health and quality of life⁵⁰, older people living on low incomes have limited options in this regard.

With a scarce supply of housing in the private market, older people may be required to move into residential aged care at an earlier age, which can be as or more costly than private rentals. Having little self-determining power over where they live, some may develop feelings of isolation and loss of control in their lives, in turn placing more stress on their mental and physical health and going against the positive ageing ethos that is promoted in our society.

⁴⁶ IGR (2015), *2015 Intergenerational Report: Australia in 2055*, Australian Government, Canberra.

⁴⁷ Millane, Emily (2015), *The Head, The Heart & The House: Health, Care and Quality of Life*, Per Capita Australia.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.12

⁴⁹ ibid

⁵⁰ Jones, A.; de Jonge, D. & Phillips, R. (2008), *The role of home maintenance and modification services in achieving health, community care and housing outcomes in later life*, AHURI, Brisbane.

Policy and reforms for the ageing population

While home ownership is high among present-day over 65s, at 82%⁵¹, greater proportions of the future aged population will hold mortgage debt or be renting. Without a corresponding increase in housing supply to match demand, the result will be an even higher demand of appropriate housing stock. A policy mix that adapts the current housing stock for household make-up, security of tenure for longer lives while also adding to the supply of new housing, particularly for the most vulnerable is therefore of paramount importance. Sustainable and client-centred aged care reform, including a better paid aged care workforce, could also ensure current and future generations of older Australians can live a life with dignity.

Personal story

Monica* is 55, and she and a friend have rented a small place in Sydney for a number of years. Over the years the rent has increased steadily. She and her housemate cannot afford the latest increase of \$60 per week and have been asked to vacate the premises.

Despite a graduate and post graduate university qualifications, Monica has struggled to find work. Added to this is a slow but steady deterioration in her musculoskeletal condition. And her housemate is currently in insecure contract work.

Monica lives on Newstart and complies with the mutual obligation activities of looking for work and attending fortnightly interviews with her job service provider, which is a challenge given her health issues. And she has exhausted all savings.

She has been looking further and further away from the CBD for something affordable and liveable. However, this adds higher costs in transport. And rental properties checked so far have been unliveable: dingy and dark and in desperate need of cleaning and repairs.

With the likelihood of her housemate's contract not being renewed and impending unemployment, in addition to Monica's, both women spent Easter discussing the possibility of having to move into the housemate's ailing parents place in a small coastal town far away from friends, community and potential future work. This created such increased stress, anxiety and pressure, they both began to get physically sick.

The prospect of leaving close friendships and their community behind is heartbreaking and has sent them both reeling.

* Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the individual.

⁵¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2011), *Census of Population and Housing*, cat. no. 2001.0, ABS, Canberra

Young Australians and homelessness

A desire to live independently

Research carried out by the Australian Youth Affairs Coalition⁵² found that 65% of the young respondents ranked housing affordability and availability as one of their top five issues, with 17% of respondents listing it as the *most* important youth issue. While critical and many reported a strong desire to live independently, barriers such as high market rental costs mean for many young people it is more of a dream than reality.

According to Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, over 17% or 44,400 of 254,000 people who turned to homelessness services for help in 2013-14 were young people presenting alone⁵³. It is not a surprise as we found that there are only 8 out of 65,000 private rentals that would have been suitable for people on Youth Allowance in this year's rental snapshot. It is also consistent with the statistics from Homelessness Australia, that three quarters of young people presenting to specialist homelessness services for assistance have a government pension or allowance as their main source of income⁵⁴.

Homeless youth and mental illness

Some of the most common reasons for young people experiencing homelessness are housing crisis, domestic and family violence and relationship/family breakdown⁵⁵. Young people also face discrimination in the housing market more than other groups due to a lack of rental references and fewer financial resources.

A major consequence facing homeless youth is mental illness, with 53% reporting that they had been diagnosed with at least one mental health condition in their lifetime⁵⁶. These homeless young people are much more likely than their general counterparts to acquire anxiety and depression. The longer they experience homelessness, the more likely they will develop severe and persistent states of mental illness. The onset of mental illness could also unleash a series of negative events, for instance skipping school at a younger age which in turn impacts education and may reduce young people's opportunities for gaining suitable employment. Trends such as these may contribute to or exacerbate intergenerational unemployment and poverty.

Inadequate Youth allowance

Newstart and Youth Allowance are at already very low levels and year on year fall further behind other payments and wages. According to some measures of poverty, Newstart and Youth Allowance both fall beneath the poverty line⁵⁷. Proposed policies implementing a waiting period of between one and six months are expected to increase the financial burden that young people experience rather than act as the incentive to find employment. In effect, it will further entrench young people in poverty.

⁵² AYAC (2013), *Australia's Youth Matters : Young people talk about what's important to them*, Australian Youth Affairs Coalition, Sydney

⁵³ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2014), *Specialist homelessness services: 2013-2014*, Cat. no. HOU 276. Canberra: AIHW

⁵⁴ Homelessness Australia (2013), *Homelessness and Young People fact sheet*, Homelessness Australia.

⁵⁵ *ibid*

⁵⁶ Flatau, Paul et al (2015), *The Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia Study: Snapshot report 1 – The Australian Youth Homelessness Experience*, Swinburne University of Technology's Institute for Social Research, the University of Western Australia's Centre for Social Impact, and Charles Sturt University, in partnership with The Salvation Army, Mission Australia, and Anglicare NSW South, NSW West and the ACT.

⁵⁷ Australian Council of Social Service (2014), *Poverty in Australia 2014*, Australian Council of Social Service, Sydney accessed 28 April from http://www.acoss.org.au/images/uploads/ACOSS_Poverty_in_Australia_2014.pdf

Personal story

Mary* is 17 years old. She was born in Albania and moved to Australia with her mother when she was a child due to the war in Kosovo.

An abusive home environment forced Mary from her home to couch-surfing between friends' homes. Still at school at that time, Mary found study too difficult in this situation and left during Year 11. At the end of 18 months, when there was nowhere else for her to stay, she slept on the streets for a while before contacting a homeless service, which referred her to youth110, run by Anglicare member *St John's Youth Services* in Adelaide.

Wanting to live by herself, Mary applied for different community housing places but was not successful. She looked at one bedroom units and granny flats, but her entire Centrelink payment would not have covered the rent. She realised the only way to get into private rental would be to move in with someone, so she and her friend at youth110 decided to move in together.

Through a program called *Next Step*, a support worker helped Mary and her friend look for and inspect houses. Despite the program offering to guarantor the lease, the property applications were rejected due to Mary being so young. Perseverance eventually paid off with the securing of a unit and *Next Step* going guarantor on the lease.

Mary's support worker helped secure a bond guarantee and rent advance from Housing SA, and connect the electricity and gas. The support worker also helped Mary and her friend apply for different grants to furnish the unit and make it a home.

If the *Next Step* program had not helped Mary and her friend, they would probably still be at youth110.

"Finding private rental as a young person is impossible when you are on your own."

* Name has been changed to protect the privacy of the individual.

Families with children in housing stress

The 2011–12 Australian Bureau of Statistics survey of Housing Occupancy and Costs⁵⁸ revealed that 34% of households who rented in the private rental market were tenants with dependent children. This represented 8.5% of all Australian households, with over 1.5 million children estimated to live in rental tenures, and almost 500,000 of them were from single parent households.

⁵⁸ ABS (2013), [Housing Occupancy and Costs, 2011-12, cat no. 4130.0](#), Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

What is Newstart Allowance?

Newstart Allowance is a government income support payment for people who are unemployed and seeking work, and are between 22 and age pension age.

What is Commonwealth Rent Assistance?

CRA is an Australian Government non-taxable income supplement, paid to income support recipient and low-income families in the private rental market, in recognition of the housing costs they face.

Life outcomes for children with insecure rental tenure

While renting can bring benefits for households that can afford to pay high rents, for instance enabling them to move to find work or to live close to facilities and transport, insecure tenure can have negative impacts on children especially those from households living on low incomes. According to a review of the large body of international research available; over time and compared to the children of home owners, children living in rented accommodation have less favourable outcomes such as reduced math and reading achievements; greater propensity to drop out of high school; less favourable lifetime prospects; and among other things, lower levels of earnings as adults. Children from families who rented were also found to be more likely to display behavioural problems and to have poorer physical health outcomes⁵⁹. It is because frequently changing homes can lead to disruptive school schedules affecting not only children's learning progress, but friendships and attachment built around the school and neighbourhood can also be disrupted when children need to frequently move around.

With the costly rental market, it is predicted that future generations will increasingly be renting for life. For the prospect of the future generations, it is important to address the negative impacts of rental tenure to children and young people. One of the ways to do so is by providing housing stability through longer tenures, in turn minimising the number of disruptions that children have to manage⁶⁰. The budgetary measure that moves single parents from parenting payment to Newstart once the child reaches 8 should also be reviewed as the people on Newstart are much more likely to experience housing stress with a lower income.

Hard to get by with very low income

As we can see from the personal stories included in this report, there is an intricate interconnection between having a stable home, a secure job and good physical and mental health. The inability to secure an affordable home does not only erode one's mental and physical health and sense of pride and identity, the financial hardship and its impacts could also affect those living close to them. For instance, financial hardship can place stress on family relationships and affect childhood development and education, all of which are important factors leading to a healthy sense of belonging and meaningful participation in the community.

Newstart Allowance

Anglicare Australia has for many years advocated for an increase in Newstart Allowance that currently stands at \$260 per week, or \$13,520 per year for a single person. After spending a considerable proportion on housing and other necessities such as food and bills, the payment simply does not go far enough for people to engage in activities that could help them improve their situation. For example, seemingly simple activities—to have a haircut for a job interview, to commute to the city for a doctor's appointment, or just to have a coffee with a

⁵⁹ Lovering, Matthew (2014), [AHURI Evidence Review 59: Secure rental tenancies help children](#), AHURI, Australia.

⁶⁰ Ibid

friend—take on a greater difficulty. NATSEM research⁶¹ shows that 55.1% of those living on Newstart or non-student Youth Allowance could not raise \$2,000 for an emergency; this compares with 10.7% of the waged population.

In addition to the low level of Newstart, its diminishing value also means that people are unable to sustain themselves for the extended periods for which they receive it. Newstart is currently indexed according to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). Therefore, it grows at a slower rate than the male average weekly earnings, which is used in adjusting the Disability Support Pension. Given the way Newstart is indexed, the payment is destined to reduce in value over time.

NATSEM⁶² reports the income of Newstart allowees at around 18% of the average male earnings in 2012. As the years progress, the value of the payment will decline. The longer people remain on Newstart, the further its value diminishes as an effective living supplement.

It is worth noting that Newstart was not designed to be a long-term living supplement. While people receiving Newstart for short periods of time can more readily use creative accounting to keep on track of payment schedules, for example by deferring payments, people who have been on Newstart for a long time don't have that option.

The impacts of long-term receipt of Newstart Allowance are not only felt in the reduced value of the payment; people who are on the payment for a prolonged period of time may also lose touch with the labour market with a consequent degradation of skills, health, and personal drive, making it even harder for them to get back on their feet.

Anglicare Australia is advocating for an increase in Newstart and other income support payments such as Youth Allowance as a way to meaningfully engage and reconnect long-term unemployed people and youth to the labour market and our community. These payments should also be indexed appropriately so that they keep pace with living standards and housing costs.

Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA)

The CRA provides important protection against complete exclusion of low-income people and families from the private rental market. A report from the National Welfare Rights Network (NWRN) shows that the removal of the CRA would increase the proportion of renters on income support payments in housing stress from 40% to 70%⁶³. While it is a very important safeguard for people who are doing it the toughest in the rental market, its efficacy is diminishing because it doesn't factor regional variations and it is not indexed in line with rising housing costs in the private market.

The CRA is, at its best, a fairly blunt instrument. All people accessing the assistance payment receive the same amount, depending on the rent they pay. The CRA in its current form does not take into account the geographic variations like the rental market does⁶⁴. For example, the emergence of a patchwork economy⁶⁵ may drive up

⁶¹ NATSEM (2012), *Going Without: Financial hardship in Australia*, Anglicare Australia, Catholic Social Services, the Salvation Army and UnitingCare Australia, Canberra

⁶² *ibid*

⁶³ Welfare Rights Centre (NSW) & Shelter NSW, 2014, *The impact of Rent Assistance on housing affordability for low-income renters: New South Wales*, Welfare Rights Centre, Sydney.

⁶⁴ Melhuish, T, King, A, & Taylor, E, 2004, *The regional impact of Commonwealth Rent Assistance*, AHURI, Melbourne

⁶⁵ Patchwork economy or two-speed economy is one that have different rates of development between the 'new economy' with high value-adding, highly skilled and high paid occupations, and 'old economy' characterised by its routine, low-skilled, and low paid jobs mainly in the service sector, transport and manufacturing – referenced from Berry, M (2006), *Housing Affordability and the economy: A review of labour market impacts and policy issues*, AHURI

rental prices in mining boom areas while the remainder of the local economy may be keep pace. This means that in places such as Gladstone Queensland, western New South Wales and the entirety of Western Australia during the mining boom and now coming off the back of it, the CRA has been and is less effective than in areas where the rental market is less inflamed by compounding factors such as inflated industry.

One of the current policy considerations on the table from the Commonwealth government is the removal of rent protection moving to a market-based rent approach for public housing tenants. As compensation public housing tenants would have full access to CRA. Public housing exists for people on low fixed incomes who can't afford to rent privately. One of the upward drivers of unaffordable housing is the decline in public housing across the board. Part of what makes public housing affordable is that it indemnifies the tenant against the worst effects of increasing rent prices. The rent will only ever be a fixed portion of their income.

Moving to a rent based market and applying CRA removes the indemnity for those in the public housing sector and brings them in line, financially, with households living on low incomes and renting privately. In the McClure report on reforms to the welfare system the admission is made that CRA can only ever play catch-up without reviewing how it is set and indexed.⁶⁶ So while the report states that there is concern for people on fixed incomes being worse off, with this policy setting, it is most likely a reality.

The expenditure on CRA has been on an increase in the past few years partly due to a reduction in public housing stock, which means some people who may have previously been in public housing are in the community housing or private rental sector where they can receive CRA⁶⁷. While CRA expenditure may ease with a more responsive housing market, the additional \$1.2bn a year from the government's proposed policy action notwithstanding, there are changes that could be made to make CRA more effective.

In the short term, CRA should be indexed in line with increasing rents. That would eliminate the widening gap between payment and rent levels, thereby putting a freeze on further disadvantage in the rental market for lower-income households. A longer term solution may be found in reviewing the CRA, in conjunction with the welfare review, to take into account regional variations, indexation and the varying rates of payment.

Policy recommendation 1—

Recognise income inadequacy as a barrier to secure housing and meaningful social participation

Actions include:

- Increase the rates of Newstart and Youth Allowance and their indexation to keep pace with living standards and housing costs.
 - Undertake a review of the Commonwealth Rent Assistance and its effectiveness in protecting against the increasing costs of rent.
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⁶⁶ Department of Social Services (2015), *A New System for Better Employment and Social Outcomes: Report of the Reference Group on Welfare Reform to the Minister of Social Services*, Department of Social Services, Canberra.

⁶⁷ White Paper on Reform of the Federation (2014), *Roles and Responsibilities in Housing and Homelessness Issue Paper 2*, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra.

What is negative gearing?

Negative gearing is the process whereby a property investor can deduct their property expenses from both the income they receive as rent from the property and from other sources of income, thereby reducing their overall tax bill.

While negative gearing may seem to benefit renters by keeping rents down, in reality it distorts the housing market, encouraging investors to take out bigger loans to buy properties, making properties more expensive to buy and therefore more expensive to rent.

Due to competition from negatively geared investors, higher prices mean homes are less affordable for people buying their own home.

Source: [AHURI – Why tax policy is housing policy \(part 1 of 2\)](#)

Housing supply crisis and importance of tax reform

Along with recognising the importance of adequate incomes to assist people out of poverty, another measure identified to address the crisis of housing supply is to minimise the impact of speculative investment through reviewing and revamping tax policies, such as negative gearing and capital gains tax.

While negative gearing and capital gains tax may once have had an important role in encouraging investment in property, these policy mechanisms have actually contributed to pushing up the value of an already limited housing stock in Australia. As a result, current and future generations are increasingly locked out of the property market.

Based on the housing consumption pattern in 2006, the housing supply gap in 2011 was estimated to have been around 76,000 dwellings⁶⁸. Accounting for a strong population growth and assuming that housing supply has remained consistent but still low, this figure would have remained if not grown in the past few years. It means a lot of first home buyers would be out-competed by investors who have a greater capacity to purchase in the market. This group of would-be home buyers is then squeezed out of the buyer's market and must resort to renting for the foreseeable future. With their more comfortable incomes, they can afford to pay for higher quality rental properties, which would otherwise be occupied by people on the next lower income tier. As the domino effect plays out, and due to the basic laws of supply and demand, people on this income tier have no choice but to rent lower quality properties, but still pay a higher price for it due to significant demand in the rental market.

The downward pressure continues until people living on the lowest incomes of our society are totally priced out of the market. Since the waiting lists for public and social housing are interminably long, they will have to compete for properties that do become available, accepting prices for poor quality housing that are still far beyond their ability to pay.

Negative gearing and capital gains tax are highly contested issues; with debate ranging from these tax levers limiting supply to driving supply. The Grattan Institute⁶⁹ showed that 5% of investment derived through negative gearing went to new builds. The remaining 95% went to existing properties. These tax policies and concessions, extensively discussed in 2010 the Henry Review⁷⁰ have also contributed to a loss of \$6.8 billion a year in revenue for the government⁷¹, funds which might otherwise have been used to finance social and physical infrastructure across the country, such as housing. In fact, the latest report from Australia Institute shows that

⁶⁸ National Housing Supply Council (2013), *State of Supply Report: Changes in how we live – Chapter 3: the Housing gap*, NHSC.

⁶⁹ Kelly, J-F., Hunter, J., Harrison, C., Donegan, P., (2013), *Renovating Housing Policy*, Grattan Institute, Melbourne.

⁷⁰ The Henry Review (2010), *Australia's future Tax System*, The Department of Treasury, Canberra

⁷¹ *ibid*

What is capital gains tax?

When a property is sold for more than it cost to buy, the difference between the (low) buying and the (high) selling price is called a **capital gain**.

If the property has been the main residence of the owner there is no tax to pay on the capital gain.

However, if the property has been owned by an investor for more than 12 months only 50 per cent of the nominal capital gain (i.e. after allowing for associated costs that weren't otherwise claimable) is included as assessable income to be taxed at the individual's rate of taxation.

The 2005–06 Survey of Income and Housing showed for that year \$4.2 billion was given in indirect assistance to investors from the untaxed 50 per cent capital gains.

Source: [*AHURI – Why tax policy is housing policy \(part 1 of 2\)*](#)

the majority of the benefits of negative gearing and the capital gains tax discounts are going to high income earners. 56% goes to the top 10% of income household and 67% goes to the top 20%. By comparison relatively little flows to low income households with just 4% going to the bottom 20% of households. The bottom half of Australian households only get 13% of the benefits⁷².

By reviewing these tax incentives that help individuals with high wealth profit from the housing market, the government could potentially create a more equitable housing market for all Australians. One of the ways that could change how these tax policies work, as we have proposed on various occasions, would be to ensure a social element is required to claim the tax benefits. For example, negative gearing might only be claimed on new homes or existing properties that are identified affordable housing for low income households. Policy makers could also ensure that other taxes such as land tax and stamp duty do not impact on the affordability of housing for household living on low incomes.

Policy recommendation 2—

Create a tax system that makes affordable housing more available

Actions include:

- Redirect negative gearing towards growing the supply of affordable housing, and improving its quality.
- Review the impact of other taxes, such as stamp duties and land taxes, on housing for low income households.

Creating sustainable social housing stock

Increasing social housing stock

As people living on low income are priced out of the private rental market due to fierce competition with renters who are more financially capable, they may have limited options but to seek accommodation from social housing providers. Otherwise, they may have to resort to living in marginal

⁷² Grudnoff, Matt (2015), *Top Gears: How negative gearing and the capital gains tax discount benefit the top 10 per cent and drive up house prices*, The Australia Institute (commissioned by *GetUp!*), The Australia Institute.

What is social housing?

Social housing is rental housing provided by not-for-profit, non-government or government organisation to assist people who are unable to access suitable accommodation in the private rental market.

Social housing include, among others, **public housing** owned and managed by the state and territory housing authorities and **community housing** managed by community-based organisations for low-to-moderate income and/ special needs households.

rental accommodation, such as caravans, boarding houses and motels, or worst still on the street.

Current public housing rents are heavily subsidised and generally well below market prices. The rental income States and Territory receive is therefore insufficient to support critical stock redevelopment, or cover the cost of maintaining existing stock.⁷³ The problem is exacerbated as properties age and the costs of property and tenancy management increase⁷⁴. As a result, State and Territory governments are stepping away from providing public housing, resulting in a reduction in public housing stocks and inevitably long waiting lists. As of 30 June 2013, nearly 160,000 people were on public housing waiting lists nationwide⁷⁵.

Transfer of housing stock to community sector

The issues as noted above have also created incentives for State and Territory housing authorities to either sell stock or transfer it to community sector providers. On the positive side, transferring housing stock to the community sector would open up opportunities for alternative ways to provide affordable housing for low-income households. Community organisations are often better placed to offer 'wrap around' support services, for instance financial counselling and family support services, and have more capacity to respond holistically to clients' needs, especially those with complex needs⁷⁶.

On the other hand, the idea that larger community housing providers could leverage the capital in these housing stocks to build additional housing, especially for those living on the lowest incomes, may be misguided. While the stock itself is being transferred the title is not, and the capital that would have come with the assets will therefore not be available to community organisations. Governments will neither accept the risk of leveraging assets for investment on a large scale nor make those assets available to other providers. Essentially, the state and territory governments have taken an expensive and failing system of housing provision and foisted it on the community sector, which has no authority or power to mitigate the risk but has an ethical mandate not to walk away.

While the transfer of housing stock to the community sector has seen a significant increase in community housing dwellings per capita in all jurisdictions since 2004, it does not offset the effect of the reduction in public housing on the overall social housing stock⁷⁷, forcing lower income households back in the private rental market. And, given the perpetual rise

⁷³ Pawson, H. et al. (2013), *Public housing transfers: past, present and prospective*, AHURI Final Report No. 215. p.10, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute, Melbourne.

⁷⁴ Department of Family and Community Services (2014), *Social Housing in NSW: a discussion paper for input and comment*, p.6, FACS, NSW.

⁷⁵ Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, *Review of Government Services 2014, Volume G: Housing and Homelessness*, Productivity Commission, Canberra, 2014., p. 2 of table 17A.5.

⁷⁶ Federation white paper

⁷⁷ White Paper on Reform of the Federation (2014), [Roles and Responsibilities in Housing and Homelessness Issue Paper 2](#), p.35, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, Canberra.

in rental prices, these households are experiencing even greater housing stress. The Australian Bureau of Statistics Yearbook in 2012⁷⁸ shows that the number of people in social housing has almost halved from 5.8% to 3.9%. The Yearbook also provides statistics which show that the increase in housing costs has risen for this population group from 18% in 1994-95 to 19% in 2009-10, constituting a \$26 a week increase.

The Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI) have reported that improvements to both the quantity and quality of social housing stock can be made through old stock being renewed in a timely manner to bolster declining public housing stock, and to avoid greater costs later on; the transfer of programs that have clearly stated, measurable objectives at the outset, and evaluation that measures achievement so as to improve future practice; and community housing providers be given more controlling power in how they use the asset.⁷⁹ These measures could potentially increase their entrepreneurialism and innovation, and build capacity to manage assets and be an important factor in sustaining an efficient multi-provider social housing system⁸⁰.

Policy recommendation 3—

Increase social housing stock sustainably and responsibly.

Actions include:

- Increase social housing stock.
 - Renew old stock in a timely manner so as to avoid greater costs later.
 - Encourage state/territory governments to transfer title along with the asset in the social housing stock transfer.
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⁷⁸ Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012, 'Housing', Year Book Australia, 2012, cat no. 1301.0, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra.

⁷⁹ AHURI (2015), "Public stock transfers to community housing the best option for a sustainable and financially supportable housing system", *AHURI Research & Policy Bulletin*, Issue 184, AHURI.

⁸⁰ *ibid*

Personal story

In Western Australia, Lori is 64 and living on a widow's pension. Previously, divorce drove her from her home and into the world of renting.

Using the small amount of money from the sale of her home, Lori rented for three years. Then an increase in rents forced her out of the rental market and into her elderly mother's garage – hot in summer and freezing in winter.

Every day Lori looks for rental accommodation; each time a little further out from where she currently lives. Either the rents are still unaffordable or the cheaper houses are very rundown.

A cottage on an isolated farm with a gravel road is available for \$200 per week but the renter will be required to look after the farm animals for the owners who work in the city. \$200 per week is 75% of Lori's pension, which would leave very little for food, petrol, bills, etc.

Lori put her name on the pensioner 'housing list' but has been told there is about a five year wait. Her belongings are in storage, at considerable cost and she needs dental work, also a costly exercise even though she would get the treatment at a much lower cost being on the pension.

Never before has Lori been in this situation as she has worked most of her life prior to giving up work 12 years ago to help with the grandchildren while their mother returned to full time work.

The situation she finds herself in now, due to unforeseen circumstances, leaves her with a feeling of losing one's sense of self and self-worth.

Depression is beating at her door, helped along by the uncertainty of her future.

Lori believes that "we are all human beings and we all need to feel safe, warm, comfortable and have food to eat, health care, mental health care and dental services, these should be available to everyone not just the well off."

What is the difference between housing occupancy and housing utilisation?

Housing occupancy and utilisation are closely related but not identical concepts.

Housing occupancy generally refers to the relationship between number of permanent residents and the size of the dwelling usually expressed in terms of the number of bedrooms. It is commonly used to indicate overcrowding, under-utilisation or the efficient use of housing stock.

Housing utilisation is a somewhat broader term that refers to how effectively space in a dwelling is used by its occupants rather than a simple formula based on household size and number of rooms, and therefore includes both spatial and temporal aspects of use.

Housing stock that matches changing needs of population

In order to meet the increasing demand for housing in Australia in a sustainable manner, it is important that the housing stock reflects and adapts to the changing needs of our population. ABS figures on housing utilisation⁸¹ reveals that while Australian households are becoming smaller on average, dwelling size as indicated by the number of bedrooms is increasing. The average number of persons per household has declined from 3.1 in 1976 to 2.6 in 2009-10. In the same period, the proportion of dwellings with four or more bedrooms has risen from 17% to 31% and the average number of bedrooms per dwelling has increased from 2.8 to 3.1, reflecting an ongoing accumulation of unused residential resources.

By taking into account the changing social trends and household make-up, both the government and housing suppliers will be able to utilise new and existing housing stock to enable more affordable housing for Australians, especially those living on a low income. For example, the Senate Inquiry into Affordable Housing in 2008⁸² indicated a decrease in household size; contributed by a variety of social factors, such as an increase in the occurrence of divorce and separation in families, people getting married later in life and families having fewer children. By providing suitably sized dwellings rather than big housing complexes, housing stocks can be used more purposefully so that fewer residential resources would be underutilised.

In his report discussing the issue of housing utilisation in improving housing affordability in Australia, Zochling⁸³ proposed that along with developing additional housing stock, the existing stock may be more optimally used by the migration of people to more appropriately sized dwelling. In order to motivate households to move to more appropriate dwellings, he proposed changes to the taxes and duties imposed upon housing transactions which currently pose a significant barrier. Furthermore, systems of reward for households who make a more sustainable choice and developers who facilitate it may also be worthy of consideration.

Policy recommendation 4—

Increasing housing stock that matches changing population needs.

⁸¹ ABS (2012), [Housing Utilisation, catalogue 1301.00 Year Book Australia 2012](#)

⁸² Senate Committee on Housing Affordability in Australia (2008), *A good house is hard to find: Housing affordability in Australia*, Senate printing unit, Canberra

⁸³ Zochling, Hugh (n.d), [Addressing Australia's housing shortage through improved housing utilisation](#), University of Technology, Sydney.

What is NAHA?

National Affordable Housing Agreement commenced in 2009 and provides the framework for the Australian, State and Territory governments to work together to improve housing and homelessness outcomes for Australians (COAG 2008).

The National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH) was established to support NAHA.

Actions include:

- Increase supply of affordable housing, including public, community and other low income rental properties.
- Ensure new housing stock reflects the changes in Australia's population age, culture, single person households, fewer children per family, etc.
- Modify and design housing to account for the needs of people, as they age or live with disability.

Leadership and genuine collaboration with the community sector

Working at the coalface with the community and its people, community organisations understand how the unaffordable housing market has detrimentally affected the lives of many who are 'doing it the toughest' in Australia. The community sector is well-placed to create positive change in people's lives but without genuine goodwill from, and collaboration with, the government, any remedies – in the housing space at least—could only be Band-Aid solutions. Housing unaffordability is a systemic issue—driven largely by housing supply shortages—and genuine, meaningful change cannot be realised until the root causes are adequately acknowledged and acted upon.

Improving tendering processes and funding announcement

Last year at this time, we addressed the importance of enforcing respectful relationships with the sector in response to the delayed announcement on the interim funding of homelessness services. In December last year, we again saw late announcements, unclear guidelines, and murky processes in play in the DSS grants tendering processes. It had created much uncertainty and anxiety among service providers. Each of these instances has lasting impacts on the way programs are managed. It affects not only workers who are in general lower paid, and often in circumstances not wholly dissimilar to the people to whom they provide support, but most importantly, those who need to know whether they can access much needed services when they need it most.

Anglicare Australia advocates for respectful relationships in contracting, which would dictate that the intention should be known at a minimum, six months from the end of the contract period. Where a competitive process is then involved, it should be resolved three months before the contract end date. As it happens we are now heading into a two year funding period for homelessness services, however the long-term plan for housing and homelessness is uncertain.

National leadership in the housing space

It was confirmed in the Senate Estimates recently that supply of housing is the responsibility of the Department of Treasury. In one view this could be seen as

progress given the reframing of housing and housing supply as an issue of infrastructure rather than welfare. In another, however, given that housing policy conversations have been halted to make way for discussions around federal and financial relations in the form of the Federation review, we have concerns that the national conversation has taken a backward step from *What can the Federal Government be doing to improve housing affordability?* to *Should the Federal Government be doing anything to improve housing affordability?* The absence of leadership from the Commonwealth Government in the development and implementation of a cohesive national housing plan/ strategy is a risk we cannot afford to accept.

With the proposed reduction in funding for housing and homelessness peak bodies including National Shelter, Homelessness Australia and Community Housing Federation of Australia just a few days before Christmas last year, in addition to the loss of other voices in the housing space: COAG Reform Council, Housing Supply Council, PM's Council on Homelessness, to name a few, Anglicare Australia advocates for a reinstatement of national leadership to guide the nation through the housing reform process.

Policy recommendation 5—

Federal Government to take national leadership and work in collaboration with the community sector

Actions include:

- Recommit to independent expertise and impartial advice on housing and homelessness strategies.
 - Sustain housing incentive schemes over the long term to allow investors, including superannuation funds, to commit necessary funds.
 - Gain Commonwealth acceptance of its leadership role in terms of coordinating and pursuing a cohesive national housing strategy.
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Conclusion

The Rental Affordability Snapshot has shown once again that people on low incomes are bearing the brunt of the housing crisis and that it is likely, without meaningful intervention, they will continue to do so. As the population grows and puts increasing pressure on urban centres housing affordability continues to be an extremely important national issue. The Snapshot has clearly shown that the nature of the housing crisis is not unique to either the city or country areas, but is felt across the board. The housing crisis is too critical an issue to be overlooked and must be acted upon immediately. To this end, **Anglicare Australia is calling for a national plan for affordable housing that is supported by all levels of government.** This means a serious commitment to investment and infrastructure; guided by the social welfare sector and industry. The plan includes the following five key priority areas:

1. Recognise income inadequacy as a barrier to secure housing and meaningful social participation

- Increase the rates of Newstart and Youth Allowance and their indexation to keep pace with living standards and housing costs.
- Undertake a review of the Commonwealth Rent Assistance and its effectiveness in protecting against the increasing costs of rent.

2. Create a tax system that makes affordable housing more available

- Redirect negative gearing towards growing the supply of affordable housing, and improving its quality.
- Review the impact of other taxes, such as stamp duties and land taxes, on housing for low income households.

3. Increase social housing stock sustainably and responsibly

- Increase social housing stock.
- Renew old stock in a timely manner so as to avoid greater costs later.
- Encourage state/territory governments to transfer title along with the asset in the transfer of social housing stock.

4. Increase housing stock that matches changing population needs

- Increase supply of affordable housing, including public, community and other low income rental properties.
- Ensure new housing stock reflects the changes in Australia's population: age, culture, single person households, fewer children per family, etc.
- Modify and design housing to account for the needs of people, as they age or live with disability.

5. Federal Government to take national leadership and work in collaboration with the community sector

- Recommit to independent expertise and impartial advice on housing supply and homelessness strategies.
- Sustain housing incentive schemes over the long term to allow investors, including superannuation funds, to commit the necessary funds.
- Gain Commonwealth acceptance of its leadership role in terms of coordinating and pursuing a cohesive national housing strategy.

Snapshot: ac.care – Southern Country Regions of SA: Limestone Coast, Murraylands/Adelaide Hills, Riverland

Introduction

ac.care provides specialist homeless services to clients across the Southern Country regions of SA. The three regions covered are Limestone Coast, Murraylands/Adelaide Hills and the Riverland. The issues regarding homelessness and housing affordability are similar across all 3 regions.

Major issues faced by people on income support payments in regional South Australia include limited access to affordable and/or appropriate housing, limited employment opportunities, and isolation from their communities.

ac.care's homelessness services work closely with clients and real estate agents to ensure quality outcomes for those who are able to access private rental properties, and assist others to access Housing SA properties. The homeless services also provide Intensive Tenancy Support to assist those facing eviction to maintain and sustain their tenancy, and Supported Transitional Housing to provide case management to address the issues which caused the initial homelessness.

As mentioned above, one of the main issues causing homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. ac.care conducted a rental affordability snapshot across the three regions, in conjunction with Anglicare Australia, on Friday 10 April 2015. The survey used rental listings on realestate.com.au.

Findings

On the weekend of 11-12 April 2015, 385 private rentals were advertised for rent in the Southern Country regions of South Australia (Limestone Coast, Murray Bridge/Adelaide Hills, Riverland). Private rentals were surveyed from realestate.com.au. Taken together, there were:

- 142 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate for people living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress;
- 303 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate for people living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

This report does not disaggregate for the 3 regions.

For the purposes of this report an "affordable" rental is one which is less than 30% of total income. Appropriateness of properties was assessed on the basis of the number of bedrooms in relation to the number of occupants.

Although there were 142 affordable and appropriate properties for people living on income support, none of those properties were affordable for single people on Newstart or Youth Allowance. While a couple with 2 children on minimum wage and FTB A had access to 235 properties that were affordable and appropriate, a couple with 2 children on Newstart Allowance only had access to 46 properties. Only 15 properties were considered affordable and appropriate for a single parent with 2 children on Parenting Payment, and 149 properties were affordable and appropriate for a single parent on a minimum wage with FTB A & B.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Southern country regions of South Australia, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	46	11.9%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	15	3.9%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	111	28.8%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	56	14.5%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	20	5.2%
6	Single	Age Pension	34	8.8%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	34	8.8%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	235	61.0%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	149	38.7%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	68	17.7%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	190	49.4%
Total No of Properties		385		

Discussion

The findings show that single, unemployed people in the Southern Country regions of South Australia have little or no access to affordable housing.

While single unemployed people had no access to affordable properties, the outcome for single parents with one or two children on income support was not much better. A single person with one child under 8 on parenting payment had access to 56 (14.5%) properties across the region. A single person who has a child over 8 and is then moved to Newstart Allowance could only afford 20 (5.2%) of the available properties.

Housing stress is increased for those on low incomes with the addition of other housing expenses. If a single person or a family are able to access affordable rentals, they then have the added cost of utilities bills. Electricity, gas and phone bills continue to rise. Those on low incomes are not able to choose the efficiency rating of their

heating or cooling. Low cost properties are often not insulated and the heating that is fitted is cheap to buy and expensive to run.

Many of the single people in the regions are youth. Youth homelessness and youth unemployment are both significant issues in country regions. In the 2013/14 financial year the Limestone Coast Homeless service had a total of 607 clients, of which 29% were aged 15 to 24. The Murray Bridge/Adelaide Hills Homeless Service had a total of 464 clients, of which 29% were aged 15-24, and the Riverland Homeless Service had a total of 562 clients, of which 25% were aged 15-24.

As well as young single people not having access to affordable housing, there is no youth specific supported housing in country South Australia.

The Federal Government policy that saw single parents with their youngest child turning 8 being moved to Newstart Allowance has also reduced their access to affordable housing.

Policy Implications

It is evident that income support recipients have little or no access to affordable housing in the regions. There is a desperate need for some policy changes to provide access and equity for those who are young, unemployed, and may also be parents. Some changes that could assist are:

- Increase Newstart/Youth Allowance;
- Leave single parents on Parenting Payment until last child turns 16 (not 8);
- Provide youth accommodation in rural/regional areas;
- Put policies in place that generate jobs in rural/regional areas;
- Provide affordable housing through schemes such as NRAS;
- Provide early intervention policies to keep young people at home;
- Reduce the cost of utilities.

Conclusion

This report highlights the fact that single people in regional areas are suffering due to lack of employment and affordable housing. Family breakdown, substance abuse and mental health are all contributing to our young people becoming homeless. The youth of today are our leaders of tomorrow and we have a responsibility to provide them with opportunities to succeed. Governments at all levels should be implementing policies to achieve equity, access and inclusion outcomes.

Regional communities will be required to tackle their issues differently in the future if they wish to grow and be inclusive of all their members. Basic human rights, of which housing is one, are community issues, not just government issues. How do we, as communities, work together to improve the quality of life for everyone within the community?

Homelessness rates will continue to increase if people don't have access to affordable housing. This will only change if governments are willing to introduce policies that provide equitable outcomes, and the wider community is willing to be a part of the solution.

Snapshot: Anglicare ACT - ACT and Queanbeyan

Introduction

The ACT, together with Queanbeyan, is unique in that its population is almost totally urban and suburban. About 386,000 people live in Canberra and a further 57,600 in Queanbeyan (ABS 2014), giving a total of 443,600 people. 1.6% of this population (compared to 2.5% nationally) reported an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, with a slightly higher proportion in Queanbeyan than Canberra. This region has a proportionally higher incidence of tertiary qualifications as well as a large student population, and approximately 40% of this region's workforce is employed in the public sector. The result of such high public sector employment is that the region's residents have, on average, a larger amount of disposable income than the Australian population more generally. However, it leaves the local economy more vulnerable to political decisions around the Australian Public Service.

In combination with an insufficient supply of housing, higher disposable incomes also result in upward pressures on rental prices. Higher income households have the capital necessary to make negative gearing investments, resulting in higher prices overall for housing and increased difficulty for lower income households to enter the property market. This results in a group of households who otherwise would purchase homes continuing to rent, increasing the pressure on the private rental market.

As rents have increased in the capital, an increasing number of people commute from nearby Queanbeyan, meaning that it makes sense to consider both towns together in any discussion of housing issues. However as this becomes a more popular option, Queanbeyan's prices are also reaching a level of unaffordability that low income earners cannot cope with. The added costs of expensive public transport over the border, or needing to run a personal vehicle, increase the difficulties for low income families who choose to do this. As shown below, people employed in lower paid industries or reliant on Centrelink benefits have next to no options aside from share housing in this market.

Anglicare ACT supports low income households in Canberra and Queanbeyan by:

- Supporting young people at risk of homelessness in supported independent living programs;
- Supporting young people to remain engaged in their education and transition to the workforce;
- Providing disability support services;
- Recycled clothing and food assistance programs, as well as partnering with parishes to support local programs;
- Supporting at-risk young families to access subsidised early childhood education and care.

Findings

On the weekend of 11-12 April 2015, 2,125 private rentals and share house rooms were advertised for rent in the ACT and Queanbeyan region. Private rentals were surveyed from local newspapers and websites including Realestate.com.au and Allhomes.com.au, and shared housing options were surveyed from Gumtree.com.au⁸⁴. Taken together, there were:

- 127 unique properties or rooms in shared houses that were affordable and appropriate for people living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress. However, more than half of these

⁸⁴ In 2015, a new data collection method was adopted where rental listings were retrieved and exported by realestate.com.au (RE) from the RE website. This method, replacing the former manual collection, will result in minor variation due to random errors. Where possible, the effects have been minimised, and should not be more prevalent than what was expected in previous Snapshots due to human error.

properties were rooms in shared houses which were only affordable to a single person receiving the Age Pension – an arrangement which is likely to be unrealistic in many cases;

- 313 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate for people living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

Aside from a small number of dwellings affordable to Aged Pensioner households, there were only two appropriate housing options affordable to any household which derived its income from a Centrelink benefit. Of particular concern was the lack of affordable rental options for young people on Youth Allowance, Newstart Allowance recipients, Disability Support Pension recipients, or Parenting Payment (single) recipients.

Young people had no affordable options in this market, the closest being a single shared accommodation option which specified that it was a lounge room. Even this property could not be rented affordably on a Youth Allowance (including Rent Assistance) income, although the slightly higher Newstart Allowance was sufficient to rent this rather unusual option.

Single parents similarly lacked affordable options in this market; while they had a slightly larger budget, the requirement for more than one bedroom meant that nothing affordable was an appropriate setting in which the children could grow with privacy and independence. Low-income single parents negotiating custody arrangements would find this choice between affordability and appropriateness of their dwelling a further disadvantage.

Those which were affordable to single aged pensioners were all rooms in shared houses, which in many cases would not be appropriate for the older person, and similarly would not be an arrangement of choice for the other housemates. Couples on the Age Pension fared slightly better although nearly all of their 57 affordable and appropriate rental options were located in Queanbeyan.

The variability of informal shared accommodation advertisements makes it difficult to compare between years. However, unlike last year, single people with a minimum wage income had a small number of options to affordably rent their own place rather than share. Predictably, most of these options were located in Queanbeyan, making it more likely that the cost of running a vehicle would need to be added to their budget.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, ACT and Queanbeyan, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	0	0.0%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	57	2.7%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	1	<0.1%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
6	Single	Age Pension	70	3.3%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	0	0.0%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	1	<0.1%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	153	7.2%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	1	<0.1%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	160	7.5%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	3	0.1%
Total No of Properties		2,125		

Discussion

As an organisation which aims to support children, young people and families, a major concern Anglicare ACT holds is the difficulty vulnerable young adults are likely to experience in this market as a result of inadequate government supports, exclusion from the workforce, and unaffordable housing. Without access to stable housing, young people face difficulties in completing education and finding and sustaining workforce participation, further excluding them from opportunities and stability into the future. Of particular concern is the lack of support for young people who reach the age of 18 after spending their youth in Out of Home Care, although the ACT Government should be commended for their planned scheme supporting young people to remain in their placement if needed until the age of 21.

Meanwhile, continuing an ongoing trend from previous years, it is particularly concerning that so few properties are affordable even for households with a minimum wage income. While a small proportion of properties were available for families with two minimum wage incomes, nothing at all was found for a single parent of two

children on a minimum wage. Single people without dependents at least have the option of a share house; 92% of the 160 dwellings that were found to be affordable to this group were shared houses.

An added factor is that these figures do not indicate the level of competition for any affordable option. Rental applicants may find themselves up against 20-50 other applicants for a property or a room in a house. Anglicare ACT has heard considerable anecdotal evidence that many landlords are more likely to choose a wage earner rather than a Centrelink beneficiary when given the choice.

While Canberra and Queanbeyan have seen a large number of new developments built over recent years, rental affordability for the most disadvantaged groups has not yet seen any noticeable difference. Market forces such as these have reduced median rents by a small amount over the past few years; however, there has been little change to the lowest-priced end of the market.

Policy Implications

As found last year, there are very few properties affordable to a single parent with a child even if the parent has a full time low-waged job. In light of the changes to single parent benefits, to encourage single parents to find work, it is disappointing to find that even a full time low-skilled worker cannot afford to live with their family in the ACT. While there is much spoken of the importance and benefits of working, the fact remains that low-paid and particularly part time workers are still unable to afford housing in this market and are likely to also have the added financial burden of childcare costs.

For those unable to find work and supported by Newstart Allowance, even the option of moving to a smaller, cheaper town is complicated by the relatively low unemployment in the ACT and Queanbeyan compared to towns in surrounding NSW where at least a small proportion of affordable housing exists. It is clear that government allowances, in particular Newstart Allowance, as well as the Rent Assistance supplement, are not keeping up with the reality of the Australian economy and need to be increased urgently.

Partnerships between the community sector and the ACT Government are crucial to continue and develop community initiatives to provide affordable housing, but just as important is ongoing systemic change to increase supply of housing and relieve the upward pressure on property prices and rents. While Canberra and Queanbeyan have recently seen significant new developments of apartments constructed, care must be taken to ensure that the properties constructed are of the type needed most in the ACT and not simply of the type most lucrative to investors. The recently developed Common Ground⁸⁵ project is a very positive step in supporting vulnerable people to rebuild their lives, but much more significant investment is required in low-cost accommodation options to support ongoing financial and social inclusion for low-income households.

Conclusion

The private rental market in Canberra and Queanbeyan is extremely unaffordable for persons on a low income such as minimum wage or government benefits. This is placing significant pressure on government housing programs, as well as contributing to financial stress and social exclusion in families unable to access subsidised housing. Aged pensioners, single parents, disability pensioners, unemployed or low-waged people and families, and students have no appropriate and affordable housing options in this market.

⁸⁵ See <http://www.commongroundcanberra.org.au>

Snapshot: Anglicare Central Queensland - Rockhampton, Gladstone and Emerald

Introduction

Anglicare Central Queensland (Anglicare CQ) exists to assist individuals, families and communities to live to their fullest potential. We work with people of all ages and from all backgrounds, to provide services from crisis intervention to long-term support. Our primary role is to respond to the needs of the vulnerable and disadvantaged in our communities. Our efforts concentrate on housing, foster care and child safety, supporting families, and providing services relating to mental health, youth and disability. Anglicare CQ offers services tailored to meet local needs in communities from the Capricorn Coast inland to Winton. In terms of housing services, Anglicare CQ provides:

- Short term and transitional housing for individuals and families on low income or whose needs are not met in the private rental market;
- Supported accommodation for individuals and families going through a period of crisis;
- Affordable long-term rentals through the National Rental Affordability Scheme.

Findings

On the weekend of 11-12 April 2015, 1,248 private rentals were advertised for rent in Rockhampton, Emerald and Gladstone. Private rentals were surveyed from online sources. While a property could be affordable and appropriate for more than one household type, any individual property can only be rented by one household type at any time. To this end, we found that:

- 191 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress;
- 727 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

From the Snapshot result, single income households are the hardest hit by the cost of local rental housing. Of the 1,248 regional properties analysed on the collection day, there were none suitable for a single person on Newstart (with or without children) or Youth Allowance. There were seven rentals suitable for people living on disability support pension, and eight were suitable for people on Aged Pension.

Singles living on the Parenting Payment with one child could access 52 rentals (4.2%), while those on the same payment with two children could only access 16 suitable rental properties (1.3%).

Singles living on the minimum wage might apply for 50 properties (4%) if on their own or 180 properties (14.4%) if they have two children.

The situations of double income households differ quite vastly. A couple on Newstart with two children was only able to access 3.4% of the rentals, while those with the same family composition but with both income earners on minimum wage were able to afford 54.2% of properties. This indicates the importance of adequate income in housing affordability.

An Age Pension couple could afford 163 rentals (13.1%) of the 1,248 properties.

Couple households living with two children on minimum wage and parenting payment might get access to 25.9% of the rentals.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Rockhampton, Gladstone and Emerald, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	43	3.4%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	16	1.3%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	163	13.1%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	52	4.2%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
6	Single	Age Pension	8	0.6%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	7	0.6%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	677	54.2%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	180	14.4%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	50	4.0%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	323	25.9%
Total No of Properties		1,248		

Discussion

These findings illustrate just how tight the rental property market is in Central Queensland, especially for those living on the lowest incomes in our society. While some household types fare better than others, as a whole the rental market remains largely unaffordable for singles and families reliant on income support payments. Experiencing high rental stress, these families would have little choice but cut down on other critical expenses such as food, bills and social activities, further impacting their mental and physical health, job prospects, community involvement and relationships with others. For those with little ones to look after, the lack of income to pay for housing may impact on children's education and development, which may increase their chance of experiencing poverty in the future.

Policy Implications

Anglicare Central Queensland advocate for housing affordability especially in the three regions surveyed in the Snapshot. We would like to see:

- An increase in growth of the National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) across the region, which will allow greater access to affordable housing for people living on low income;
- An increase in the community housing stock to cater to the changing population needs, particularly young people and singles;
- Viable and effective housing models being developed and funded to reverse the trend of housing unaffordability.

Conclusion

Housing is a critical factor for people's social and economic wellbeing. This year's Snapshot shows that people living on the lowest income support payment, especially those on Newstart Allowance and Youth Allowance, have literally nowhere to seek accommodation in the private rental market. While other households may fare better, the private rental market remains largely unaffordable for those doing it the toughest. Anglicare Central Queensland advocates for housing affordability in the region to help people improve their situations so that they can participate in the community meaningfully.

Snapshot: Anglicare North Coast - North Coast of NSW

Introduction

Anglicare North Coast covers a broad demographic area, stretching from Port Macquarie in the south to Tweed Heads in the north. Within this area, we have several larger regional cities, but also large rural areas, with smaller networks of towns to meet housing demand. Whilst the larger urban areas are relatively well serviced in terms of infrastructure and services, residents outside of those areas face additional barriers to accessing services, employment and housing.

As stated in previous years, the North Coast is economically disadvantaged when compared to both the NSW average and the national average. Levels of unemployment remain high, with longer than average disengagement from the work force and an overall lower median household income. We have higher levels of households over 60yrs old, single parent households and single households. Compared to an Indigenous population of 2.5% (NSW) and 2.3% (Australia), the North Coast has an Indigenous population of 4.1%. Typically, Indigenous households face further barriers and discrimination when trying to access housing.

With the restructure following the Going Home, Staying Home reforms, outlying towns and villages have seen accommodation support services withdrawn and centralised into the larger towns. Thus, residents face yet another obstacle to accessing support to find and maintain accommodation due to the displacement of services. Larger towns retain support services, albeit at a reduced level, whilst the more rural towns must either rely on telephone support or face-to-face work, constrained by increased agency workloads and the difficulties imposed by distance.

Anglicare North Coast offers a range of services: Community Housing, Partners in Recovery, problem gambling financial counselling, Disaster Recovery and Emergency Relief welfare provision.

Findings

On the weekend of 11-12 April, 690 private rentals were advertised for rent on the North Coast. Private rentals were surveyed from www.realestate.com.au⁸⁶. While a property could be affordable and appropriate for more than one household type, any individual property can only be rented out by one household type at any time. To this end, we found that:

- 50 (7%) individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress;
- 239 (35%) individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

We have once again seen a drop in rental properties across the region (2013: 912, 2014: 808, and 2015: 690). This represents a 15% drop in properties available on the day, compared to the previous year. However, the percentages of properties that are both affordable and appropriate remain broadly the same. The only household that has any significant access to rental properties is again the household where the couple are on minimum wage, with Family Tax benefit A. As in every other year, single, low income households are effectively locked out of housing, with couples on the age pension and waged single parent households struggling to get into housing.

⁸⁶ In 2015, a new data collection method was adopted where rental listings were retrieved and exported by realestate.com.au (RE) from the RE website. This method, replacing the former manual collection, will result in minor variation due to random errors. Where possible, the effects have been minimised, and should not be more prevalent than what was expected in previous Snapshots due to human error.

Regional Variations

- Byron Bay for the third year running had no properties whatsoever considered affordable and appropriate for any of the household groupings;
- Ballina had 3 properties available and appropriate for couples on the minimum wage, in receipt of FTB A; Port Macquarie had 7 properties available and appropriate for couples on the minimum wage, in receipt of FTB; Tweed Heads had 14 available and appropriate for couples on the minimum wage, in receipt of FTB A;
- Coffs Harbour, Casino, Lismore, Kempsey and the Clarence Valley reflect the regional trend of having no housing for single households on lower rates of benefits, limited availability for couple households, single waged or those on higher rates of benefits, with the majority of properties considered affordable and appropriate being reserved for households in receipt of a wage and FTB A.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, North Coast of NSW, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	13	1.9%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	3	0.4%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	40	5.8%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	8	1.2%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	1	0.1%
6	Single	Age Pension	5	0.7%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	5	0.7%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	228	33.0%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	47	6.8%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	11	1.6%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	0	0.0%
Total No of Properties		690		

Table 2: Number and percentage of affordable and appropriate properties by household types on the North Coast

AVAILABILITY OF AFFORDABLE AND APPROPRIATE RENTAL PROPERTIES, BROKEN DOWN BY REGIONS IN THE NSW NORTH COAST OF NSW, AND BY HOUSEHOLD TYPE										
Regions surveyed		Ballina	Byron Bay	Casino	Clarence Valley	Coffs Harbour	Kempsey	Lismore	Port Macquarie	Tweed Heads
Total properties counted		69	33	30	122	141	34	77	109	75
Household Type	Couple,2 children Newstart	0	0	0	4 (3%)	0	8 (24%)	0	1 (1%)	0
	Single, 2 children, Parenting Payment	0	0	0	1 (1%)	0	2 (6%)	0	0	0
	Couple, Age Pension	0	0	10 (33%)	10 (8%)	4 (3%)	8 (24%)	6 (8%)	0	2 (3%)
	Single, 1 child, Parenting Payment	0	0	0	2 (2%)	0	2 (6%)	1 (1%)	0	0
	Single, 1 child, Newstart	0	0	0	1 (1%)	0	0	0	0	0
	Single, Age pension	0	0	0	2 (2%)	2 (1%)	1 (3%)	0	0	0
	Single, 21 +, Disability Support Pension	0	0	0	2 (2%)	2 (1%)	1(3%)	0	0	0
	Single, Newstart	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Single, 18 +, Youth Allowance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Single (sharing), Youth Allowance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Couple, 2 children, Min wage, FTB A&B	3 (4%)	0	15 (50%)	68 (56%)	38 (27%)	23 (68%)	44 (57%)	23 (21%)	14 (19%)
	Single, 2 children, Min wage, FTA & FTB	0	0	5 (17%)	23 (19%)	3 (2%)	12 (35%)	3 (4%)	1 (1%)	0
	Single, Min wage	0	0	1 (17%)	4 (3%)	2 (1%)	2 (6%)	2 (3%)	0	0
	Couple, 2 children, Min wage, Parenting Partnered FTB A&B	0	0	10 (33%)	36 (30%)	5 (4%)	16 (47%)	10 (13%)	0	1 (6%)

Discussion

It is interesting to note that Byron Bay, Ballina, Port Macquarie and Tweed Heads are areas of relative affluence within the North Coast, with a high influx of retirees. This potentially has a knock-on effect to house prices and availability of housing stock for the private rental market, which in turn inflates rental costs. This is reflected in the poor rental provision in these areas, unless you are in receipt of the minimum wage.

Further consideration could also be given to the upgrade of the Pacific Highway and its impact on the rental market. Coffs Harbour has seen an increase in properties available to couples on minimum wage following the end of the works in the area. As the works move north this year, this may place further stress on a restricted market.

As in previous years, we see housing availability almost exclusively centred on those who are waged. Additionally, there are far fewer one bedroom units available on the market, with most housing stock a minimum of two bedrooms. With high demand and low supply, often the rents for one bedroom units are still priced beyond the means of the lower income single households. Sharing accommodation is not widespread across the region, which further limits the opportunities for single people to obtain accommodation.

This year we have included households where one partner works and the other is in receipt of the partnered parenting payment. Whilst they had greater opportunities than the lower income households, they still would be unable to access any housing in Ballina, Byron Bay, Port Macquarie and Tweed Heads, with limited access in Coffs Harbour and Lismore. They had greatest opportunity in the Clarence Valley, Casino and Kempsey where they could access, on average, a third of the properties for rent on the day.

It is of great concern that the affordable rental market on the North Coast only meets the need of families with the highest income, within the chosen demographic range of this snapshot. Residents of the North Coast are in a low socio-economic bracket, with work clustered around casual, insecure employment in hospitality, retail and social care. Poor public transport links limits choice for those without cars, and those who have cars face extra financial pressures on an already tight budget.

Insecure, inappropriate and unaffordable housing is the over-arching message from the private rental market. We need to address the mismatch of rent and income, and increase housing options for lower income, single households if we hope to resolve the ongoing issues in accessing suitable accommodation on the North Coast.

Policy Implications

There is an increasing lack of appropriate and affordable rental accommodation;

- There is a lack of affordable rental properties right across the region surveyed, with our research indicating a 24% decrease in affordable properties between 2013 and 2015;
- The stock that is available does not meet the demographics of the region, with few properties available that are affordable for small households, particularly single person households.

Impact of major infrastructure works, such as Pacific Highway upgrade;

- It appears that the Pacific Highway upgrade had an impact on the availability of affordable properties in Coffs Harbour in previous years and that the Coffs Harbour situation has now improved with completion of the works – of concern now is the impact of planned work in areas such as the Clarence Valley. Whilst such works may only impact for 1- 2 years, the situation can have a very detrimental effect in that time.

State and Federal Governments need to urgently develop policies and strategies to increase the supply of affordable housing, through both an increase in public housing and by harnessing private sector expertise and

financing options. Further, the impact on housing demand should be considered as part of the planning for major infrastructure works.

Conclusion

It is disappointing and alarming that our findings reflect a decrease in the total number of affordable rental properties across our region, with a 24% decrease from 2013 to 2015. Whilst there are regional variances in the amount and types of properties available, the picture overall is very grim.

Basic, affordable housing is a right of all members of our communities and the impact on those who are homeless or living in unaffordable rental accommodation can be very detrimental, leading to an increase in the demand for other services, such as mental health, financial counselling, emergency relief and family support. Both state and federal governments need to work together to develop a comprehensive plan to address this urgent matter.

Snapshot: Anglicare North Queensland - Cairns region

Introduction

Anglicare North Queensland covers a broad area as far south as Mackay, as far north as the cape and as far west as Mt Isa, for the purposes of this snapshot the Cairns Local government region was examined.

The 2011 Census shows Cairns to have a population of 224,436 people. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up to 10.3% (QLD 3.6%; Aus. 2.5%) of the population. The median age is 37 years of age. Just over half of the population (58.6%) are in full time employment; there is an unemployment rate of 7% (QLD 6.1%; Aus. 5.6%). The most common occupations in Cairns include Professionals 16.0%, Technicians and Trade Workers 15.9%, Clerical and Administrative Workers 13.3%, Managers 12.5% and Labourers 11.8%.

Housing Services offered by Anglicare North Queensland in Cairns:

- Cairns Homelessness Service Hub;
- HomeStay;
- Cairns Integrated Crisis Accommodation Service (Quigley Street Night Shelter);
- St Margaret's House;
- St John's House.

Findings

On the weekend of 11-12 April 2015, 879 private rentals were advertised for rent in the Cairns Region. Private rentals were surveyed from newspapers and online sources. While a property could be affordable and appropriate for more than one household type, any individual property can only be rented out by one household type at any time. To this end, we found that of the total number of properties available, only 28.5% were both affordable and appropriate across all 14 household types.

- A couple with two children on minimum wage with FTB part A had the highest number of properties available at 26.7% (235 properties);
- A couple on the Age Pension had 64 properties available (7.3%)
- For a single person on the minimum wage, only 2.2% (19 properties) were both affordable and appropriate
- A couple with two children with one parent on the minimum wage and one parent receiving parenting payment partnered, FTB A & B just 1.7% of all properties met the criteria of being affordable and appropriate;

Alarming, a single person on Newstart or Youth Allowance has no properties available that are both affordable and appropriate, with a single parent on Parenting Payment Single not faring much better (0.5% of properties available). For those on the Disability Support Pension, only 4 properties were available, which equates to 0.5%. The same figure stands for a single person on the Age Pension.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Cairns region, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	0	0.0%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	64	7.3%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	4	0.5%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
6	Single	Age Pension	4	0.5%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	4	0.5%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	235	26.7%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	4	0.5%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	19	2.2%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	15	1.7%
Total No of Properties		879		

Discussion

The findings state that there are 64 properties available to households on income support and 254 properties available to households on minimum wage.

The findings do not take into account the amount of people in the Cairns region who are TICA listed, i.e. listed on a tenancy history database, have bad references, no references, have family pets, or have a family unit consisting of a large amount of children and people who are experiencing race discrimination, single parent discrimination etc.

Large family units that have applied for numerous rental properties without success are couch surfing or rough sleeping. Child safety then become involved and remove the children from the parents care until they can obtain appropriate long term safe housing. The counter reaction to a child safety removal is that Centrelink then

changes the parent's payment to Newstart thus making it impossible for the parents to obtain any large house that will be an appropriate sized dwelling to have their children reunified into their care.

People of the Cairns region who are currently TICA listed will not even get a look-in on any real estate property and will remain in the homelessness cycle until the 7 year blacklisting is complete (unless they are able to access an advocacy service of some type to challenge the listing and have it removed).

Finding a private rental property that has enough rooms and space is one thing, finding a rental property with enough rooms and space that accepts family pets is another. There is a lack of rental properties in Cairns that will accept family pets and people are not willing to give away their beloved family members so are unable to apply for many of the affordable and appropriate properties available.

Policy Implications

The following actions are recommended to alleviate the pressure on the affordable housing market:

- Currently there are no tenancy advocacy services in the Cairns Greater Region. These are invaluable in allowing family unit types access to information about tenant rights and property manager/owner obligations, reduce the overall likelihood of problematic tenancies resulting in eviction;
- Greater security of tenure and landlords who understand the pressures of living on limited incomes. It may be the experience of some households that whilst they spend more than 30% of income on their housing costs they are able to manage the expense because of the long-term security of tenure that has been afforded by the landlord. Similarly, landlords that have an understanding of the ebbs and flows of household expenditure facilitate the security of tenure. However, when circumstances force a change, for instance, the death of a partner, the uncertainty and inflexibility around the private rental market and security of tenure can often make it difficult to manage the higher expenses of housing.
- Increase Social Housing Stock - In the whole of Cairns region there are 5,000 properties from Cardwell right up to Cooktown and out to Georgetown. In any given month there can be between 20 and 40 vacancies. However, currently there are approximately 2,000 applications for housing.

Conclusion

The findings highlighted the lack of affordable and appropriate availability for all family unit types, most notable for all single family unit types and all single parent family unit types. With insufficient social housing stock to meet the needs of family unit types, no tenancy advocacy services to assist struggling tenants & the ramifications of not obtaining a private rental option (family units breaking down in homelessness) it is clear that Cairns is facing an accommodation shortage crisis. All family unit types on a minimum income will continue to struggle.

Snapshot: Anglicare Northern Inland – Tamworth, Armidale, Inverell, Moree

Introduction

Anglicare Northern Inland (ANI) provides professional, confidential counselling for individuals, couples, adolescents, children and families. Also on offer is a wide range of training in many valuable Life Skills areas.

Our services are available to all members of the community regardless of religious belief, or ability to pay. These services are provided across the Northern Statistical Division of NSW; a rural regional area that includes the major centres of Tamworth, Armidale, Inverell and Moree.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of major service centres of Anglicare Northern Inland

Area	Population	Indigenous Population	Unemployed Population	Income Support Recipients*	Average Fortnightly Rental Payment
Tamworth	56,294	8.4%	5.9%	26.8%	\$440
Armidale	24,105	6.3%	7.4%	28%	\$481
Inverell	16,075	6.5%	7.3%	31.6%	\$356
Moree	13,429	20.8%	6.0%	25.1%	\$291

* Selected benefits, source ABS Regional profile data 2012.

The region encompasses all the Snapshot household types with people living on income support payments comprising between a quarter and one third of each regions population. ANI provides service to all who present with an emphasis on providing support to the more vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community through the following:

- Counselling: individual, relational, family, gambling and financial issues;
- Education: family relationship education and skills training, financial management, anger management;
- Indigenous Community: family safety program, dedicated counselling, men's and women's healing programs, financial management, anger management program;
- Community support: Partners in Recovery program and Hope for Life teenage pregnancy support program.

Findings

On the weekend of 11-12 April 2015, 472 private rentals were advertised for rent across the northern regions of New South Wales: Tamworth, Armidale, Inverell and Moree. Of the private rentals listed, there were:

- 72 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate for people living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress;

- 262 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate for people living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

Table 2 shows the proportion of privately listed rental properties that would be both affordable and appropriate for each of the different households that rely on either income support payments or the minimum wage as their main source of income.

Table 2: Rental Affordability, Northern Inland Service Areas, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	10	2.1%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	62	13.1%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	9	1.9%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	3	0.6%
6	Single	Age Pension	13	2.8%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	13	2.8%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	227	48.1%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	36	7.6%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	35	7.4%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	87	18.4%
Total No of Properties		472		

From the table above it can be seen that housing across the northern parts of NSW is mostly out of reach for people living on low incomes and that not even the minimum wage is a sufficient buffer against housing unaffordability.

Discussion

The findings above show that many people living in the Northern regions of NSW are unable to afford the costs of housing whilst living on a low income without entering into varying levels of housing stress. With average rents across the region around \$390 per fortnight it is no wonder that housing costs exacerbate the issues that many households already experience, such as debt repayments and under/unemployment.

One of the main issues facing households in the northern regions is sufficient income to cover the increasing costs of housing. Employment in and around the major centres is predominantly available in those traditionally lower-paid sectors of agriculture, retail, and health care and social assistance. While some areas are experiencing a net population drain, others are experiencing a net gain. Both trends have impacts on the availability of jobs and thereby the capacity of households to absorb higher housing costs.

In particular, whilst ANI works with a broad range of households, the groups most affected would be those engaged with ANI programs with a particular focus on:

- The Indigenous community;
- People experiencing financial stress because of unemployment, low income and high debt levels;
- People experiencing mental health issues.

Policy Implications

The capacity to earn a sufficient income to cover the basic costs of living and to provide housing without undue housing stress is stretched to the extremes in the face of low employment opportunities.

In this regard, a core policy focus should be addressing the barriers to affordable housing that exist due to inadequate income support payments.

Further, that the Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) payment which seeks to aid housing affordability should be reviewed and reformed to keep pace with the changing costs relating to housing.

Finally, that policy mechanisms to support and revitalise the employment opportunities in rural Australia are revisited.

Conclusion

Of the 472 properties advertised for rent on the given weekend in April, only 72 of them were suitable for any one of the households who rely on income support payments as their main source of income. High unemployment, shifting populations and household debt are increasingly exacerbating housing unaffordability across the northern regions of NSW. From the experience of ANI, Indigenous communities and those experiencing mental ill-health are perhaps some of the hardest hit in these areas. The level of income support payments and the effectiveness of the CRA in improving housing affordability must be addressed. Policies to revitalise rural economies should also be considered.

Snapshot: Anglicare Northern Territory—Northern Territory

Introduction

Anglicare NT recognises that unsafe, inadequate and expensive housing is a challenge across the Northern Territory. People who struggle to find affordable housing often resort to living in overcrowded and sometimes unsanitary conditions which constrains their capacity to maintain employment and participate within their community in a meaningful way.

Anglicare NT continues to advocate for additional resources in the housing sector to ensure that improved housing stock and support services can be available for Territorians who most need this support.

Anglicare NT provides services such as the Tenancy Support and Sustainability Program to help people at risk of eviction to retain their public housing tenancy, Youth Housing Program to assist young people 15-19 and transitional accommodation program to help adults and families experiencing homelessness to establish a stable housing environment. In addition, Anglicare NT provides some emergency relief support services and case management.

Findings

On the weekend of 11-12 April 2015, 1,367 private rentals were advertised for rent in Northern Territory. Private rentals were surveyed from online sources⁸⁷. While a property could be affordable and appropriate for more than one household type, any individual property can only be rented out by one household type at any time. To this end, we found that:

- 4 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress;
- 25 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

Further analysis

- There were no (n=0) properties that were both affordable and appropriate for people who receive Newstart Allowance, Single Parenting Payment, Disability Support Pension or Youth Allowance;
- Of the 4 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate, the analysis made evident that only people who currently receive the age pension (i.e. a couple, with no children) would be appropriate for these properties.

⁸⁷ In 2015, a new data collection method was adopted where rental listings were retrieved and exported by realestate.com.au (RE) from the RE website. This method, replacing the former manual collection, will result in minor variation due to random errors. Where possible, the effects have been minimised, and should not be more prevalent than what was expected in previous Snapshots due to human error.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Northern Territory, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	0	0.0%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	4	0.3%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
6	Single	Age Pension	0	0.0%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	0	0.0%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	23	1.7%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	0	0.0%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	2	0.1%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	2	0.1%
Total No of Properties		1,367		

Discussion

Across the Northern Territory, the average cost of renting has decreased over the year from \$581 (2014) to \$560 (2015) in line with costs per week outlined in our 2013 analysis (\$566 per week).

The average rental cost within the Northern Territory as a whole \$560 (2015), is lower when compared with just Darwin (and its suburbs) which costs \$604 per week, however this is a reduction from 2014 when the average cost in Darwin was \$642 per week.

There are a number of factors that may impact the average price decrease and these could include:

- A decrease in interstate migration with the Northern Territory recording a net loss of 3,383 residents to other states (13,856 arrivals compared to 17,239 departures) [2014 ABS data];
- The Northern Territory contains 5 of the top 11 council areas for the shortest time a house is held, including the shortest in Australia, being Palmerston at 5.7 years [CoreLogic RP Data, March 2015];
- Overall property prices in Darwin have experienced the biggest drop in price of any capital city in Australia. While prices increased by 0.8% in March, property prices remain 0.8 % below where they were this time in 2014 [CoreLogic RP Data, March 2015].

While there was a reduction on the weekly costs of rent on average, on the weekend of data collection there only 4 surveyed properties that were both affordable and appropriate within the Northern Territory for people on the pension and some form of welfare payment. There were only 25 that were affordable and appropriate within NT for people on minimum wage. This continues a three year trend within the Northern Territory of lack of availability of housing stock that is both appropriate and affordable for those in our community who have the most limited resources.

Policy Implications

The Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot process has reinforced the importance of government policy interventions and the need for appropriate resources to address the housing affordability crisis in Northern Territory. Too many people within the Northern Territory who are reliant on some form of welfare payment are paying too large a percentage of their limited resources towards housing which often isn't particularly appropriate for their needs and places extra stress on the household to maintain essential services such as electricity, water and purchasing fresh and healthy food.

Despite programs like the 'head-leasing initiative' funded by the Territory Government⁸⁸, there has not been significant progress to address the crisis of housing affordability in the Northern Territory. Policy interventions to counter the risks associated with housing stress could include further increasing the supply of affordable and appropriate housing across the Northern Territory as well as extending the National Rental Affordability Scheme with a focus on young people.

Anglicare NT remains concerned about the lack of information about the future of housing policy in the Northern Territory and encourages both the Territory and Australian governments to make some long term strategic investments to ensure stability in housing for those people who most need support.

The National Affordable Housing Agreement calls for all levels of government to act in regard to this issue with particular emphasis placed on housing for Indigenous people. The Northern Territory has the highest rates of youth homelessness in Australia and, without intentional intervention, this housing crisis will continue to disadvantage young people and impact on their ability to meaningfully participate in their community.

Conclusion

The Anglicare Australia Rental Affordability Snapshot shows within the Northern Territory that there is definitely a housing affordability crisis as we have identified 0% of properties that were affordable for families who currently receive the Newstart or parenting allowances.

The Rental Affordability Snapshot also demonstrated that less than 1% of rental properties surveyed were affordable and appropriate for a couple living on the age pension and only 1.9% of rental properties were affordable and appropriate for families living on the minimum wage.

The picture for rental affordability in the Northern Territory is precarious, with more investment required in the National Rental Affordability Scheme leveraging private investment in affordable housing. Failure to attract either government or private investment in affordable housing options will continue to place cost of living pressure on those who can least afford the increases.

⁸⁸ Through the Real Housing for Growth head-leasing initiative, the Northern Territory Government is offering to head-lease privately owned dwellings, developed on either privately owned land or nominated Territory owned sites, for a 10 year period, where the owner/investor is guaranteed 52 weeks market rent per year. The Territory Government will then rent the dwellings to eligible key workers at 30% below market rent. http://www.housing.nt.gov.au/housing_choices/develop/head_leasing_initiative

Snapshot: Anglicare NSW South, NSW West & ACT – Southern NSW

Introduction

The population of this region is 163,320 (ABS 2014) and 3% have an Indigenous background, many of whom live in the South Coast area. While the South Coast's fastest growing demographic is in people aged 55 and over, the Southern Tablelands is growing fastest in the 15-24 age group. Major regional centres here are Goulburn, Yass, Batemans Bay and Bega (please note Queanbeyan has been included in the ACT report).

Anglicare NSW South, NSW West & ACT provides support to low-income households in South-Eastern NSW through:

- Housing services and homelessness support in the South Coast, Goulburn and Yass regions;
- Emergency relief assistance;
- Youth and family support services;
- Disability support services;
- No Interest Loan Scheme and Financial Capability services.

Findings

On the weekend of 11-12 April 2015, 590 private rentals and shared houses were advertised for rent in South-Eastern NSW. Private rentals and rooms in shared houses were surveyed from websites including Realestate.com.au, Allhomes.com.au and Gumtree.com.au. Taken together, there were:

- 82 unique properties or rooms that were affordable and appropriate for people living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress. Importantly, more than half of these properties were only affordable and appropriate to a couple household where both people received the Age Pension;
- 370 unique properties or rooms that were affordable and appropriate for people living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

Once again, there were no affordable housing options for individuals living on Youth Allowance or Newstart Allowance. Across the entire region, 2 properties were affordable to a single parent family receiving Newstart Allowance which required two bedrooms. Of particular concern were:

- No affordable options for young people receiving Youth Allowance, or people experiencing unemployment living on Newstart – even in share house arrangements;
- Fewer than 5% of properties affordable and appropriate to single parent families living on government support, including fewer than 1% suitable for families where the primary income was Newstart Allowance, and fewer than 1% suitable for families with two children receiving Parenting Payment Single;
- Fewer than 10% of properties affordable and appropriate to single parent families with a minimum wage income, meaning little relief even for single parents who do find full-time, low-paid work which is compatible with their child care obligations.

A change in the methodology meant that the total number of properties observed was markedly lower this year than in previous years. However, the number of properties in the 'potentially affordable' range (that is, with rent less than \$401.82 per week) was slightly higher. This difference is likely to be due to an improvement in the methodology and the exclusion of a large number of holiday-specific short-term rental properties on the South

Coast and Snowy Mountains regions, which are advertised alongside ordinary properties but at significantly higher cost. Despite the smaller sample, and increase in properties observed in the relevant price range, the number of properties found suitable for several low-income household types has decreased over the past year.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Southern NSW, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	17	2.9%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	4	0.7%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	62	10.5%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	26	4.4%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	2	0.3%
6	Single	Age Pension	16	2.7%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	10	1.7%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	266	45.1%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	58	9.8%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	49	8.3%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	107	18.1%
Total No of Properties		590		

Discussion

The Capital Region has considerable diversity within its area in terms of industry and socio-economic disadvantage. While the major affordability issues in Canberra and Queanbeyan continue to have an effect on the broader Capital Region as people seek cheaper housing outside the capital, the coastal towns experience different seasonal pressures. As the ACT report found, a total absence of affordable accommodation for several household types including single parent households and single individuals means that low-income and even low-waged households can only find affordable accommodation in towns outside the ACT.

Discrimination and limitations for low-income and disadvantaged households

In a context where there is a very limited supply of affordably priced housing, competition between prospective tenants is high. As a result, landlords can pick and choose the tenant they prefer, leaving single parent families, Centrelink-supported households, Indigenous households and people with disabilities facing repeated rejections, owing to discriminatory perceptions about these groups being less desirable tenants.

Anecdotes from workers in the South Coast area allude to real estate agents openly acknowledging that single parent families had a poorer chance of securing a property. Another person supported by Anglicare Disability Services who required minor modifications to a rented property to prevent falls was unable to convince the landlord to make the modifications, which would be paid for by a service provider. Anglicare services advocated for 12 months to the landlord before the changes were made, during which time the person continued to experience falls at home.

Households whose incomes are derived from Centrelink benefits are often unable to move to regions where housing is more affordable. Those required to look for work as part of their Centrelink obligations risk losing their benefits for up to 6 months if they move to a town with significantly worse unemployment, even if they do so in search of affordable housing. The relatively high employment rates and housing costs of towns close to the ACT means households in this situation could be trapped in an unaffordable area.

Young people who have left Out-of-Home Care are at particular disadvantage in their early years of independence, especially with regard to finding and maintaining stable housing. The absence of any affordable accommodation to single people living on Youth Allowance or Newstart Allowance means that young care leavers pursuing further education or seeking work are at particular risk for financial disadvantage.

Seasonal issues in the South Coast area

A large number of properties for rent in the South Coast area are only available for short-term holiday rentals, which distort the housing supply issues the area faces. While there may be a large number of houses, many are not available to long-term tenants, leaving a shortage for permanent residents of the area and resulting higher prices.

Two major employers in the area have recently lost Government funding, putting a large number of people out of work or on reduced hours. Meanwhile, locals observe that small businesses are also feeling the pressure and a number have gone out of business.

Canberra's impact on the Capital Region

Queanbeyan was not included in the South-Eastern NSW snapshot owing to its very close connection to Canberra, with a significant proportion of its population working in the ACT and similarly a large number of Queanbeyan workers residing in the ACT. However, as property prices in Queanbeyan are driven up by Canberra's expansion, households seeking more affordable accommodation are looking further out into the Capital Region. Towns such as Goulburn, Bungendore and Cooma are increasingly home to Canberra workers, who may have higher incomes but spend a significant amount of their time, and consequently money, in Canberra rather than in the local economy.

Policy Implications

The ongoing housing affordability issues in the Capital Region require an urgent response from the NSW and Federal Governments in order to prevent individuals and families falling into further disadvantage and social exclusion as a result of housing stress.

Inadequacy of Government Allowances

Anglicare was virtually unable to find any affordable housing for singles on Newstart or Youth Allowance anywhere across the broader region including the ACT, Southern Tablelands, and the Riverina. This suggests that the Newstart for singles needs to be adjusted to reflect the reality of the housing market. In particular, Rent Assistance needs to be increased to assist singles and families on low paying benefits.

Similarly, supports for single parents need to be increased so that these families can secure the stable accommodation they need in order to improve their circumstances through work or education.

Social Housing

Current waiting times for social housing in many areas of regional NSW are unacceptably high, leaving families who experience homelessness without options in an unaffordable private rental market. The NSW Government needs to invest in social housing as a vital component of regional infrastructure to enable more households to gain the stability they need.

Supporting leavers of Out-of-Home Care

Young people who leave out-of-home care at age 18 are particularly vulnerable and are over-represented in homelessness services. Affordable, supported housing programs need to be made available to vulnerable young people in regional NSW to support their transition to independent living and full economic participation.

Negative Gearing

While it has been shown that negative gearing increases housing costs in major cities, it is possible that the effects are also being seen in coastal towns where holiday houses are able to act as an investment property when they are on the market as short-term rentals. These properties may assist the tourist economy but may sit empty over low season, unavailable to those who require housing and driving up local housing prices but without residents participating in the local economy. Anglicare supports the recommendations of ACOSS's 'Fuel on the Fire' report (2015), in particular to prevent negative gearing investment property losses against other income, and to use the tax savings to fund Phase 5 of the National Rental Affordability Scheme.

Conclusion

The private rental market in South-East NSW has few options for persons on a low income such as minimum wage or government benefits. This is placing significant pressure on government housing programs, as well as contributing to financial stress and social exclusion in families unable to access subsidised housing. In particular, aged pensioners, single parents, disability pensioners, unemployed people and families, and students have virtually no access to appropriate and affordable housing.

Snapshot: Anglicare Riverina - Riverina

Introduction

The Riverina is made up of urban, rural and rural-residential areas in the Murrumbidgee and Murray region with a total population of 274,274. The City of Wagga Wagga, Albury and Griffith are the major centres of the Riverina, home to approximately 63,000, 50,000 and 24,000 respectively. These centres are hubs for the provision of health, education, and other government services.

According to the 2011 Census, the median individual weekly income within the Riverina (Murrumbidgee SA4) region is \$521, slightly lower than the NSW average. The median cost for renting a house within the Riverina is \$180, compared to \$300 across NSW. While the lower prices are representative of smaller rural towns, larger cities are more expensive. The Wagga Wagga LGA consists of 24,682 private dwellings, with the median weekly rental cost of \$220 which is relatively high for the region.

The region has a strong education base with Charles Sturt University campuses located at Wagga Wagga and Albury, TAFE NSW Riverina Institute locations at Wagga Wagga, Griffith, Narrandera, Leeton, Tumut, Cootamundra, Temora, West Wyalong, Corowa, Deniliquin, Finley and Hay, RAAF and Kapooka Army Base at Wagga Wagga. The capacity to attract and retain skilled labour in the region continues to be a challenge, especially considering the ageing population and migration of younger people aged 20-35 years.

Anglicare Riverina supports households on low incomes in the Riverina through a variety of services including the No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS), the Ashmont Resource Community Centre, community based emergency relief programs, and child and family support programs.

Findings

On the weekend of 11-12 April 2015, 1,034 private rentals were advertised for rent in the Riverina. Private rentals were surveyed from online sources⁸⁹. While a property could be affordable and appropriate for more than one household type, any individual property can only be rented out by one household type at any time. To this end, we found:

- 311 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate for people living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress;
- 653 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate for people living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

Households on income support

Comparing 2014 data to 2013 the percentage of affordable rental properties decreased for eight out of the ten household types on income support, despite the fact the total number of properties examined increased from 887 to 1034. Couples receiving the Age Pension had 244 suitable properties available across the Riverina. Couples with two children on Newstart had far less choice with only 46 suitable properties available. Other household groups such as a single parent on the parenting payment was worse off again with 12 suitable

⁸⁹ In 2015, a new data collection method was adopted where rental listings were retrieved and exported by realestate.com.au (RE) from the RE website. This method, replacing the former manual collection, will result in minor variation due to random errors. Where possible, the effects have been minimised, and should not be more prevalent than what was expected in previous Snapshots due to human error.

properties available. Only two suitable properties were found for single people on Newstart or Youth Allowance. The only household group to see an increase in the number of suitable properties was a single parent with one child receiving the Parenting Payment (up from 8% to 10%).

Households on the minimum wage

The results demonstrate that of the low income household types, couples both earning the minimum wage are in a better position to find affordable and appropriate housing. This household group had 475 suitable rentals available across the Riverina (46 % compared by 42% in 2014), followed by single persons (178) and single parents (150).

A new household type included in this year's snapshot was a household with one parent earning the minimum wage and the other receiving a parenting payment. This group had 254 suitable properties available across the Riverina.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Riverina, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	46	4.4%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	12	1.2%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	244	23.6%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	104	10.1%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	13	1.3%
6	Single	Age Pension	77	7.4%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	44	4.3%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	2	0.2%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	2	0.2%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	2	0.2%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	475	45.9%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	150	14.5%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	178	17.2%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	254	24.6%
Total No of Properties		1,034		

Discussion

The results of the snapshot demonstrate that the private rental system is failing single people on income support. Across the Riverina, there were only two affordable and appropriate rental properties for young people whose primary source of income is Youth Allowance or Newstart. Both options were share accommodation in Gundagai, which would leave young people faced with significant issues such as transport, social exclusion and limited employment opportunities. Research published by The Brotherhood of St. Laurence in March 2015 highlights the youth unemployment crisis facing Australian youth aged 15 to 24 years old. With one in five unemployed Australians being a teenager, the labour force is shutting out young people. For young people leaving the care system, the marked absence of rental options raises serious concerns. Gaps in current leaving care and after-care policies mean that when a young person in care turns 18 they can often spiral into homelessness, drug and alcohol addiction, criminality and ultimately a lifetime of welfare dependency.

For families relying on income support, the proportion of affordable and appropriate rentals was greatest in areas away from the main population centres. As an organisation delivering front line services such as emergency relief, there is an evident link between food insecurity and rental stress. It is also important to note that the figures do not indicate the level of competition for any affordable option. Rental applicants may find themselves contending against other applicants for a property or a room in a house and there is anecdotal evidence that many landlords are more likely to choose a wage earner rather than a Centrelink beneficiary when given the choice.

While minimum wage earners are in a better position than those on income support, it is still concerning that the majority of properties are not located in the Riverina's major population centres. In locations such as Lockhart and Junee there are fewer opportunities for further education and training, and a greater amount of social disadvantage.

The snapshot shows that couples and single people receiving the Age Pension have more options in the Riverina than metropolitan regions. Wagga Wagga and Albury are two of the seven cities that form Evocities, a project funded by the NSW Government aimed at encouraging people to relocate from Sydney and other metro locations through a \$7,000 regional relocation grant.

An observation also not reflected in the snapshot is the population growth Wagga Wagga has experienced. Capital investment in the health sector including the \$290 Wagga Base Hospital upgrade and residential and commercial developments such as the Murrumbidgee Mill site is opening further opportunities for investors; however this has seen housing demand increase and the gap between people on very low and low incomes and high incomes widen. High income earners in the defence, education and health sector are given regular preferencing of housing in the private market. The increasing provision of short term housing for medical staff for fly in specialists or locums increases competition and drives low income earners out of the equation.

Ageing Government housing is also impacting several Riverina communities. Houses that are severely damaged in suburbs such as Mount Austin and Tolland have been boarded up by Housing NSW and removed from the availability lists in Wagga Wagga.

Policy Implications

The housing affordability crisis is a severe issue facing regional communities. The NSW State Government has produced a discussion paper on the future of social housing in New South Wales. Anglicare Riverina endorsed a response to this paper led by Anglicare Sydney, recommending that the NSW Government:

- Increase supply and availability of affordable housing in the private market;
- Improve pathways, conditions and sustainability in the private rental market;
- Improve potential for opportunity and pathways for client independence.

The social housing policy that follows from the present discussion needs to properly consider low income households and people living in crisis. One of the most vulnerable populations experiencing exclusion from the housing market is young people in care. Anglicare Riverina's main activity is foster care and residential care for children and young people in statutory care. Recent findings from the Swinburne University of Technology's study 'The Cost of Youth Homelessness in Australia' revealed that almost two-thirds of homeless youth had come out of state care. This demonstrates the need for a major government review at a policy and systems level if we are to break the cycle of disadvantage experienced by this cohort of youth. Currently, there is no ongoing financial support provided to carers once their foster children turn 18, which can make it difficult for them to continue providing care. Providing young people in care the opportunity to remain in care longer if need be needs to be discussed as a potential solution.

The inadequacy of Government Benefits is also highlighted through the snapshot findings. There is an immediate need for the NSW State Government to make representations to the Federal Government to:

- Increase Newstart by \$50 per week;
- Restore Single Parenting Payments to single parents whose youngest child has turned 8 years old until the child reaches 16 years;
- Increase the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance by \$30 per fortnight and index the payment to any increase in market rent price.

Conclusion

Appropriate, secure and affordable housing is the basic foundation for the well-being of individuals, families and communities. The data from this year's snapshot adds to the growing body of evidence reflecting the housing crisis facing vulnerable people in our community. It is clear young people are severely impacted by the lack of suitable housing options across the Riverina and this has been an ongoing trend since the start of the snapshot in 2009. Similarly, single parents are also facing exclusion from the rental market with limited options in the major centres. The reality is that while families with one or both partners earning a minimum wage are better off than any other household group, the options available are commonly associated with increased social exclusion and vulnerability.

Snapshot: Anglicare SA - Adelaide

Introduction

The AnglicareSA Rental Affordability Snapshot was undertaken in conjunction with the Australian Centre for Community Services Research at Flinders University. The snapshot surveyed rental properties available in the Adelaide region over the weekend of April 11 2015. The survey used rental listings on realestate.com.au.

Properties were assessed for affordability and appropriateness for a number of different household types and incomes. This survey defined an affordable rental as one which took up less than 30% of the household's income. The 30% benchmark is commonly used as an indicator of 'housing stress' among low income households.

We assessed how many properties would be affordable for each of the household types listed in the findings section of this report. The only income sources taken into account were the household's main income support payment or minimum wage and Family Tax Benefit. Other allowances the household might receive (e.g. Mobility Allowance) were not included. Commonwealth rent assistance was included as income for the purpose of calculations.

Data was disaggregated to separate listings of appropriate and affordable properties. Appropriateness for properties was assessed on the basis of the number of the bedrooms in relation to the number of occupants. For a property to be considered suitable, it was required to be affordable and appropriate.

Findings

On the day of data collection, 3,394 properties were identified as available for rent in Adelaide, South Australia.

Households reliant on income support payments have the least access to the private rental market with:

- Newstart and youth allowance households able to access 1% or less of the available private rentals, this includes households with children.
- Households reliant on the Parenting Payment Single similarly are able to access 1% of households.
- Aged pensioners were able to access 2% of the private rentals and singles aged 21 and over living on the Disability Support Pension able to access less than 0.1%
- Households which count the minimum wage as an income source could access between 0.5% for single income households with no children and 40% for dual income households with children.
- An additional household type for the 2015 Snapshot includes both the minimum wage and Parenting Payment. This household could access 13% of the advertised rental properties.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Adelaide, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	37	1.1%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	4	0.1%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	74	2.2%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	2	<0.1%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
6	Single	Age Pension	3	0.1%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	3	0.1%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	1347	39.7%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	180	5.3%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	16	0.5%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	452	13.3%
Total No of Properties		3,394		

Discussion

On the day of the snapshot, 107 appropriate and affordable houses were available for rent in the aggregate by households on income support payment. This was equivalent to 3% of the rental market. 1363 appropriate and affordable houses were available to rent in the aggregate for households on a minimum wage. This was equivalent to 40% of the rental market.

Appropriate and affordable rental accommodation was in extremely short supply for households on income support as a whole category, but the property availability figures were lower than the aggregate figure of 3% for each household type analysed. Disaggregating the figures for household type, 1% of properties were available at the time of the snapshot for couples on Newstart allowance with two children, and 2% of properties were available to couples on the Age Pension with no children. All of the other 8 household types had access to 0% of the market, with between 0 and 4 actual properties available to rent for each household type across the whole of the Adelaide metropolitan area.

Similarly, disaggregated figures for households on the minimum wage reveal 0% of the rental market (or 16 properties) being available as affordable and appropriate housing for a single person on the minimum wage at the time of the snapshot.

This survey does not take in to account suitability of properties in regards to physical accessibility, nor does it account suitability of neighbourhood or region.

Policy Implications

Over the six years of the Anglicare Rental Affordability Snapshot AnglicareSA has shown repeatedly that housing unaffordability is at crisis levels for people living on low incomes across the Adelaide and greater South Australian region. Action must be taken with a coordinated, systemic and broad approach to addressing housing affordability in Australia. AnglicareSA calls for a **national plan for social and affordable housing**, which includes the following five key priority areas:

1. Increase social housing stock and access
2. Recognise income inadequacy as a barrier to secure housing and meaningful social participation
3. Create a tax system that makes affordable housing more available
4. Increase housing stock that matches changing population needs
5. Federal Government to take national leadership and work in collaboration with the community sector and state and territory governments.

Conclusion

This snapshot assessed the degree of access to the housing rental market for 14 household types on 11 April 2015, when housing was assessed against criteria for affordability and appropriateness.

Couples on the Age Pension with no children had access to 74 properties across the entire Adelaide metropolitan area, and families with children, and who had a minimum wage component of their income, had access to between 5% and 40% of the rental market. All other household types had access to less than 2% of the rental market, with 9 household types having access to 0% of the rental market at the time when the snapshot was taken.

Snapshot: Anglicare Southern Queensland - Brisbane Metro

Introduction

2015 is the sixth year Anglicare Southern Queensland (ASQ) has contributed to Anglicare Australia's annual nationwide Rental Affordability Snapshot. This year ASQ evaluated over six thousand (6,362) online rental advertisements from the property website, realestate.com.au (RE). The advertisements were listed on the weekend of 11 - 12 April 2015 and cover the 202 suburbs of metropolitan Brisbane. They include house, townhouse and unit rentals as well as a small number of embedded share accommodation advertisements.

Methodology

Several methodological refinements were adopted in 2015 to improve data quality and consistency across the contributing agencies.

- Nationally, a new data collection method was introduced. For the first time, in 2015 the Snapshot was generously supported by realestate.com.au, who electronically supplied all rental advertisements from their website. This replaced ASQ's former collection method of manually extracting summary data using the RE website's embedded search filters. To check the impact of the new collection method, ASQ used both collection practices in 2015 to undertake a 'parallel run' assessment. Only minor and inconsequential variations were observed in the data retrieved using the two different collection methods;
- The formula used to estimate household incomes for dual minimum-income families was also revised in 2015. The revised formula reflects the phasing out of the Dependent Spouse Offset by the Australian Taxation Office over recent years. The current estimate is higher than previous years and consistent with family members submitting independent income tax returns;
- Additionally, ASQ reduced the scope of the Rental Affordability Snapshot in Brisbane in 2015. The scope of the Brisbane survey had been expanded in 2013 and 2014 to allow a comprehensive assessment of the size and impact of share accommodation on rental affordability. The primary findings from these assessments are unlikely to change for some time. Consequently, the scope of this year's survey has been limited to the Brisbane rental market in general.

For the purposes of this study, a rental property is generally considered affordable if its rent is less than 30 percent of (post-tax) household income.

About Anglicare Southern Queensland

With a workforce of approximately 2,000 people across residential aged care, community care and social services programs, ASQ serves disadvantaged members of the community, including those in the surveyed suburbs, through a range of social and community welfare activities. These include nursing care and domestic assistance in the home, physiotherapy, emergency accommodation for victims of domestic violence, working with foster carers in the care of vulnerable children, providing a safe caring environment for frail elderly people, services for the homeless, parental education and counselling, and pastoral care. We also offer a range of specialist services within Indigenous, homeless, multicultural and rural and remote communities.

Findings and Discussion

Rental Affordability

On the weekend of 11-12 April 2015, over six thousand (6,362) private rentals were advertised for rent in metropolitan Brisbane. Private rentals listed on the property website realestate.com.au were assessed. While a property could be affordable and appropriate for more than one household type, any individual property can only be rented out by one household type at any time. To this end, we found that:

- 57 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress;
- 731 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

From the table on the following page it is apparent low income earners are largely excluded from the private rental market in Brisbane.

Families with two minimum incomes are a notable exception. Based on dwelling appropriateness and affordability criteria, 680 advertised rental properties were considered suitable for a couple with two children and two minimum incomes. This represents one in nine (10.7%) of the advertised rental properties in 2015.

By comparison, only 12 of the 6,362 advertised rental properties were considered affordable and appropriate for a couple on Newstart allowance with two children.

Single people on low incomes are especially disadvantaged by the private rental market. Based on the 30% income criterion, none (0%) of the 6,362 rental properties advertised in metropolitan Brisbane was affordable for singles on Newstart, Austudy or Youth Allowance.

The cheapest advertised rental in 2015 was a \$100 per week share accommodation listing. Yet this rent exceeds the 2015 Youth Allowance (shared accommodation) rent threshold by \$34 per week.

In response to the recognised shortage in affordable student accommodation in the CBD, Brisbane City Council recently proposed a financial incentive scheme to encourage developers to build student accommodation around the Brisbane CBD⁹⁰.

The advent of share-bedroom listings in metropolitan Brisbane in recent years suggests the private rental market is willing to adapt to meet the needs of low income renters. These advertisements also confirm that low income renters will compromise living arrangements (and Anglicare appropriateness criterion) to allow other accommodation criteria (e.g. cost and/or location) to be met.

⁹⁰ Silva, K. (2015). "Developers to receive discounts to build Brisbane student accommodation", Brisbane Times (online), Feb 25. At: <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/developers-to-receive-discounts-to-build-brisbane-student-accommodation-20150225-13om7y.html>

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Brisbane, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	12	0.2%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	3	<0.1%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	30	0.5%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0.0%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
6	Single	Age Pension	18	0.3%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	0	0.0%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	680	10.7%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	22	0.3%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	51	0.8%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	40	0.6%
Total No of Properties		6,362		

Number of Rental Advertisements

The number of rental properties advertised on realestate.com.au rose by 5% to 6,362 rental properties in 2015 (from 6,055 in 2014). This was a relatively modest increase by comparison to the 30% growth between 2014 and 2013 (see Table 2).

The growth in rental advertisements between 2015 and 2014 was not uniform across Brisbane's five subregions. Rental advertisements grew by around 15% in Brisbane's eastern, southern and western suburbs. This is in marked contrast to the 4% decline in rental advertisements (to 2,646 in 2015) for Brisbane's inner city suburbs.

Table 2: Comparison of number of rental advertisements by region, 2015 to 2013

Region ¹	Number of Rental advertisements ²		
	2015	2014	2013
Brisbane - East	647	548	545
Brisbane - North	922	875	643
Brisbane - South	1341	1181	942
Brisbane - West	806	697	581
Brisbane Inner City	2646	2754	1930
Brisbane Metro	6362	6055	4641

¹ Source: ABS ASGS 2011

² Includes rental houses, townhouses, units, flats and apartments advertised on realestate.com.au on 11-12 April 2015

Despite this decline, Brisbane's private rental market continues to be dominated by inner city properties. Over 40% of all Brisbane rental advertisements (6,362) were for properties located in the Inner City (2,646). The subregion was dominated by units and flats, accounting for nearly three quarters (73%) of all advertised rental properties (overall, units and flats represented half (50%) of all rental listings advertised across metropolitan Brisbane in 2015).

Advertised rents

On average advertised rents in Brisbane declined by \$3 per week (to \$430 per week) in 2015 (see Table 3). The decline reflects lower advertised rents for properties in Brisbane Inner City and, to a lesser extent, Brisbane South. By comparison, advertised rents rose by \$21 per week for properties in Brisbane East (to \$450 per week on average in 2015). This rent increase is primarily due to the growing popularity and the ongoing gentrification of Brisbane's bayside suburbs.

Table 3: Comparison of median weekly rents by region, 2015 to 2013

Region ¹	Median Weekly Rent Rental properties ²		
	2015	2014	2013
Brisbane - East	450	429	417
Brisbane - North	395	387	385
Brisbane - South	410	415	403
Brisbane - West	440	439	446
Brisbane Inner City	460	474	470
Brisbane Metro	430	433	425

¹ Source: ABS ASGS 2011

² Includes rental houses, townhouses, units, flats and apartments advertised on realestate.com.au on 11-12 April 2015

Despite the decline in Inner City rents, rents in this subregion are \$30 per week more expensive than Brisbane metropolitan rents on average, due to ongoing growth in luxury accommodation (see Table 4).

Table 4: Comparison of median weekly rents by region and accommodation type, 2015

Region ¹	Median weekly rents ²		
	House/Townhouse	Unit/Flat/Apartment	All Rental Properties
Brisbane - East	450	395	450
Brisbane - North	415	365	395
Brisbane - South	445	355	410
Brisbane - West	475	395	440
Brisbane Inner City	540	445	460
Brisbane Metro	460	400	430

¹ Source: ABS ASGS 2011

² Includes rental houses, townhouses, units, flats and apartments advertised on realestate.com.au on 11-12 April 2015

Rental properties in Brisbane Inner City are largely unaffordable and/ or inappropriate for low income households (nearly half are two bedroom units). Yet demand for rental accommodation especially in Brisbane's

inner city suburbs is expected to remain high given the proliferation of tertiary education facilities and welfare services for the homeless and disenfranchised. Consequently the impact of limited rental affordability in Brisbane Inner City remains a pressing concern for residents and authorities alike.

Conclusion

Analysis of data from the property website realestate.com.au suggests the needs of low income renters are not able to be met by the private rental market in Brisbane. Despite a decline in advertised rents and an increase in the number of rental listings in 2015, low income earners (particularly single people) are largely excluded from the private rental market in Brisbane.

The advent of share-bedroom listings in metropolitan Brisbane in recent years suggests the private rental market is willing to adapt to meet the needs of low income renters. These advertisements also confirm that low income renters will compromise living arrangements (and Anglicare appropriateness criterion) to allow other accommodation criteria (e.g. cost and/or location) to be met.

It is uncertain what options and resources low-income families, the aged and people with disabilities are using to find rental accommodation.

Low income renters who must rely on the Brisbane private rental market are likely to be spending considerably more than 30% of their household income on weekly accommodation rents. The suitability of the rental property to meet their household/family accommodation needs may also be compromised.

Snapshot: Anglicare Sydney - Greater Sydney and the Illawarra

Introduction

Anglicare Sydney's Rental Affordability Snapshot covers a diverse area which includes Greater Sydney and the Illawarra region (including Shoalhaven and the Southern Highlands)⁹¹. The aim of the snapshot is to highlight issues of affordability for people looking for rental accommodation on low incomes.

According to the 2011 Census, there were around 1.6 million households in Sydney (including Central Coast) and 160,000 in the Illawarra and surrounds – collectively accounting for about two-thirds (67%) of households in NSW. Of this number, 32 percent of households were renting their home in Sydney and 27 percent in the Illawarra region.

In 2011, the median weekly household income in Greater Sydney was \$1,477 per week. This was higher than the median income of households in the Illawarra Statistical Area (\$1,116 per week), a sub-region of the Illawarra, and in the Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven Statistical Area (\$896 per week). However, some aspects of household expenditure were also higher in Greater Sydney – households paid an average of \$2,167 per week in mortgage repayments or \$351 per week in rent. By comparison, households in the Illawarra Statistical Area paid less on average than those in Sydney on mortgage repayments (\$1,950 per week) and rent (\$250 per week). Those in the Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven Statistical Area had the lowest average in the region for mortgage repayments (\$1,604 per week) and rent (\$230 per week).

Findings

On the weekend of 11-12 April 2015, 13,235 private rentals were advertised for rent in Greater Sydney (excluding Central Coast) and 919 properties were advertised in the Illawarra Region. This year, REA Group Ltd provided the Anglicare Australia network with exported data from their website (realestate.com.au) for the weekend of data collection. Anglicare Sydney reviewed data for Greater Sydney and the Illawarra by cross-checking the data against live listings on realestate.com.au and the print editions of the Sydney Morning Herald (11/4/15) and the Illawarra Mercury (11/4/15).

Taken together, there were:

- 60 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate for people living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress. The majority of these properties were located in Greater Sydney (n=41 properties) with the remainder located the Illawarra Region (n=19);
- 958 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate for people living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress. Again, the majority of these properties were located in Greater Sydney (n=697), with the remainder in the Illawarra (n=261).

Among households receiving income support payments, couples on the Aged Pension had the largest number of affordable and appropriate properties available to them across Sydney and the Illawarra (n=50). The number of suitable properties was much lower for other households including single people on the Aged Pension (n=7),

⁹¹ Geographies covered in this Snapshot are the Sydney Greater Capital City Statistical Area (GCCSA) and the Illawarra and Southern Highlands/Shoalhaven Statistical Areas Level 4 (SA4s).

Anglicare Sydney has also prepared an extended report focusing on this region, as well as the Central Coast of NSW. Central Coast data has been excluded from this summary as it is included in the Samaritans Foundation section. The full Anglicare Sydney report can be downloaded at www.anglicare.org.au

couples with children on Newstart Allowance (n=4) and single parents on the Parenting Payment with one child (n=4) and two children (n=1). Importantly, no suitable properties were found for single people on Youth Allowance, Newstart or the Disability Support Pension.

Results reveal that some Minimum Wage earners had a greater chance of obtaining housing without being under rental stress. Prospects were best for coupled families on the minimum wage (n=902), followed by single persons (n=56) and single parents with two children (n=12). This year's Snapshot also examined rental affordability for families with two children in which one parent was earning the Minimum Wage and the other parent was receiving the Parenting Payment (partnered). Such families would have been able to afford 65 appropriate properties without entering into rental stress.

The online classifieds website Gumtree (gumtree.com.au) is another source of housing for single persons. An indicative search of 'Flatshare/Houseshare' listings for the Sydney Region⁹² revealed that at face value, there were around 1,200 share-houses that were affordable for single people on the Minimum Wage. In the 'Wollongong' and 'South Coast' regions, there were only around 100 affordable options for single people on the Minimum Wage. No analysis of suitability has been conducted on these share-houses, with many advertisements seeking a person of a particular gender, race, religion, etc.

⁹² Gumtree regions used

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Greater Sydney and the Illawarra, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	4	<0.1%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	1	<0.1%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	50	0.4%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	4	<0.1%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
6	Single	Age Pension	7	<0.1%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	0	0.0%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	902	6.4%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	12	0.1%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	56	0.4%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	65	0.5%
Total No of Properties		14,154		

Discussion

Within Greater Sydney, the vast majority of affordable and appropriate rental properties for households dependent upon income support payments were in the Outer Ring (n=27), at least 20km from the Sydney CBD. Of the remaining properties, eight were in the Middle Ring (5-20km from CBD) and six were in the Inner Ring (within 5km of the CBD). Only two properties in the Middle or Inner Ring were affordable and appropriate for households not receiving the Aged Pension. Within the Illawarra region, the majority of affordable properties were located in the Southern Highlands and Shoalhaven (n=10). Only three suitable properties were located in Wollongong, with a further six properties located in the balance of the Illawarra. These results confirm that rather than being a solution to Sydney's lack of suitable housing, the Illawarra also faces its own critical lack of affordable and appropriate housing, without tenants entering into rental stress.

Policy Implications

The issue of rental affordability facing thousands of Greater Sydney and Illawarra residents requires an urgent and long-term commitment to improve affordability from all levels of government, community and business sectors.

On a national level, housing affordability must be addressed by a Cabinet portfolio and with funding for the re-establishment of an independent housing specialist entity to gather and analyse data on housing supply and demand in Australia. All levels of government need to commit to long-term agreements such as the National Affordable Housing Agreement and the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness, with strategies and funding commitment for at least five years. The Federal Government needs to work with all levels of government to commit to a formal five-year plan with numerical targets to increase the supply of social and affordable housing. Recipients of Newstart and Commonwealth Rent Assistance desperately need increased income support to help prevent them entering rental stress in the Greater Sydney and Illawarra area.

On a state level, attention must be directed to the social housing crisis. With 59,500 approved applicants for social housing waiting on the NSW Housing Register, diminishing housing stock, decreased government funding and fewer people housed in social housing, immediate action must be taken to increase supply and availability of social housing.

Snapshot: Anglicare Tasmania - Tasmania

Introduction

On the weekend of 11-12 April 2015, Anglicare Tasmania collected information on all the properties advertised as available for rent across the state. This included houses, flats and rooms in share houses. The information was gathered from online real estate sites and from newspapers. We then assessed these properties on the basis of whether they were appropriate and affordable for people living on low incomes.

We worked out whether people who depend on Centrelink payments could afford to find suitable accommodation for themselves and their family. We also assessed the situation for people who are working and earning the minimum wage.

Findings

We identified 1,842 properties advertised for rent throughout Tasmania over the weekend of 11-12 April 2015. Of these, only a small proportion were affordable for people who depend on Centrelink payments as their main source of income.

People on Newstart and Youth Allowance

- There were only 4 rental properties advertised that were affordable for a young person aged over 18 who depends on Youth Allowance. All were rooms in share houses, and not one of these was in the north-west region;
- Only 5 of the rental properties in the state were affordable for a single person who depends on Newstart Allowance. These were the same rooms in share houses, plus one other and again, none was in the north-west;
- A family with two children where the parents were looking for work would have been able afford fewer than 5% of the advertised properties (85 properties).

Single parents on Parenting Payment Single

- Only 27 properties, 1.5% of the total, would have been suitable for a single parent with two young children and a sole parent with one child under five would have found only 4% suitable for their needs (73 properties).

Single parents whose youngest child is aged over 8

- Only 12 properties would have been suitable for a single parent whose child had turned eight and who therefore was no longer qualified for Parenting Payment, only for the lower Newstart Allowance. Not a single one of these properties was available in the whole of the northern or southern regions.

People receiving Age Pension

- 6.9% were affordable for a single person on the pension (128 properties);
- 14.7% were affordable for a pensioner couple (270 properties).

People receiving Disability Support Pension

- Only 2.2% of properties (40) were affordable for a single person living on the Disability Support Pension, and we were unable to assess any of these for their suitability as far as physical accessibility or convenience to transport or health or community services.

Minimum wage earners (in full-time work)

For people who are working full time and earning the minimum wage the situation is still very limited.

- Only 13.2% were affordable for a single minimum wage earner with no children (243 properties);
- Close to the same proportion, 12.8%, were affordable for a sole parent worker with 2 children (236 properties);
- 19.9% were affordable for families with two children where one parent was working full-time earning the minimum wage and the other caring for the children and in receipt of parenting payment partnered (367 properties);
- A couple with two young children where both parents were working full-time would have found 36.5% (672 properties) around the state to be affordable.

Regional perspectives

North West Tasmania

There was not a single property advertised in the north-west region that would have been suitable and affordable for a young person or a single person looking for work or studying.

While the North West region had more properties suitable for families earning the minimum wage, a large proportion of these were in communities where the chances of finding employment were very low, and in more isolated areas with related very high transport costs to find employment or to get to shops and to health and other services.

Southern Tasmania

Young people are also disadvantaged in the south – there were only 2 properties suitable for a young person on Youth Allowance.

The situation for people with children was particularly difficult in Southern Tasmania. Even for families with two children where one parent was working full-time earning the minimum wage and the other caring for the children and in receipt of parenting payment partnered, only 10% of properties would have been suitable.

Northern Tasmania

Again suitable accommodation for a young person, looking for work or studying was virtually non-existent with only 2 properties advertised.

There were no properties at all in the Northern region that would have been suitable for a single parent whose child had turned eight and who therefore no longer qualified for Parenting Payment, instead only the lower Newstart Allowance.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Tasmania, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	85	4.6%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	27	1.5%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	270	14.7%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	73	4.0%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	12	0.7%
6	Single	Age Pension	128	6.9%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	40	2.2%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	5	0.3%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	4	0.2%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	4	0.2%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	672	36.5%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	236	12.8%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	243	13.2%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	367	19.9%
Total No of Properties		1,842		

Discussion

The results of this year's survey again demonstrate the difficult situation that Tasmanians living on low incomes find when looking for housing in the private rental market.

Every year, Anglicare Tasmania surveys advertised rental properties and assess their suitability for people living on low incomes. The total number of properties advertised was less than last year and within that the proportion of suitable properties available for each household type was also lower. There were few properties that would be affordable for people depending on government income support payments, and in some areas absolutely none. While there is some regional variation, the situation for people working and earning the minimum wage is also difficult.

Many of the properties that were of a suitable size and affordable were in isolated areas, away from where jobs, shops and services are located, and where transport and other costs may be high. So in fact these would not be appropriate in terms of overall costs or access to necessary services.

A number of the otherwise affordable properties were in shared accommodation, which is not suitable for everyone. Some advertisements indicated that the person would be required to share a room.

We noted that amongst the properties some had various stated restrictions – including that a property would not be let to a person with a child, that applicants need to be employed or that bonds from community service organisations would not be accepted.

The Rental Affordability Snapshot assesses suitability only in terms of the number of bedrooms. It cannot not take into account whether the property is physically accessible, or otherwise of an adequate standard. Many lower rent properties are very expensive to heat or are far from services with consequent transport costs and thus running costs potentially wipe out the benefits of lower rent.

Given the great demand for the properties that are affordable it is evident that many people must spend a disproportionate amount of their income on housing, putting sometimes dangerous pressure on other elements of their budget. The Snapshot also takes no account of related housing costs such as bond and rent in advance and the costs of moving.

Policy Implications

Anglicare Tasmania is particularly concerned about the situation for young people in need of housing and the results from this year's Rental Affordability Snapshot show that this group is especially disadvantaged. Affordable housing is essential for the many young people who must leave home to pursue study or seek apprenticeships and other employment.

Young people who have been living in out-of-home care are a group with particular needs for secure and affordable accommodation. We urge that there be better transition planning for young people leaving care, and that they each have a well thought-out 'Leaving Care Plan' that includes ongoing supports. We believe that there should be capacity for support to be provided to young people leaving care until at least the age of 21.

We urge that there be improved availability of social housing for young people, and would like to explore the institution of benchmarks or subsidies to ensure that all social and community housing projects provide a suitable proportion of accommodation specifically for young people.

Anglicare Tasmania continues to argue that income support payments should be raised to ensure that all people are able to lead full lives, in safe secure housing.

Conclusion

Anglicare Tasmania has long advocated the importance of public housing and the need for community and social housing options to be structured so as to be truly affordable to people living on very low incomes.

Assistance with energy saving advice and modifications has proved to be an important service for many low-income households and helps to offset, albeit in a small way, high rental costs. Anglicare Tasmania also urges that benefits and pension rates be set at an adequate level.

Our survey this year again confirms that much more needs to be done to ensure that Tasmanians living on low incomes are able to lead dignified lives and not be forced into hardship in other areas of life in order to pay for their housing.

Snapshot: Anglicare Victoria and St Luke's - Metropolitan Melbourne, Central Victoria, Gippsland and the Coasts

Introduction

Anglicare Victoria's 2015 Rental Affordability Snapshot covered metropolitan Melbourne (including both inner and outer/semi-rural shires) and a selection of regional and coastal areas broadly consistent with the localities in which Anglicare Victoria and St Luke's deliver their programs and services.

The metropolitan Melbourne Snapshot included 31 Local Government Areas (LGAs), and the regional and coastal Snapshot included 12 LGAs, namely in the eastern and central regional areas.

Anglicare Victoria's services operate out of approximately 35 service sites located across metropolitan Melbourne, and the regional areas of Gippsland (Morwell, Maffra, Sale, Bairnsdale, Leongatha) Ballarat, Myrtleford, Warrnambool, Ararat, Bright and Mt Beauty. The St Luke's range of services are also diverse, and are delivered broadly across Central Victoria. Main office locations include Bendigo, Eaglehawk, Albury, Deniliquin, Echuca, Swan Hill, Kyneton and Maryborough.

Both Agencies provide care and support for marginalised and in-crisis families, individuals, young people and children in Victoria, through over 100 different services. These include:

- Out-of-Home Care for children and young people;
- Crisis accommodation, support, counselling and mediation for young people;
- Intensive family counselling, support and parenting education;
- Education programs for children and young people;
- Women's, men's and boys' domestic violence programs;
- Disability support services and respite;
- Support for dealing with drug and alcohol abuse, problem gambling and sexual assault;
- Food, material aid and financial counselling for low income families;
- Mental health services.

Findings

On the weekend of 11-12th April 2015, 14,728 private rentals were advertised across metropolitan Melbourne, and 3,072 were advertised across 12 regional and coastal areas⁹³ targeted for this Snapshot. Private rentals were surveyed from the online source, www.realestate.com.au⁹⁴, with a total number of 17,800 listings captured.

While a property may be affordable and appropriate for more than one household type, any individual property can only be rented out by one household type at any time. To this end, we found that for metropolitan Melbourne:

⁹³ Greater Bendigo, Campaspe, Ballarat, Mornington Peninsula, Greater Geelong, Mooroolbool, Mt Alexander, Baw Baw, Latrobe, Wodonga, Macedon Ranges, Mansfield.

⁹⁴ In 2015, a new data collection method was adopted where rental listings were retrieved and exported by realestate.com.au (RE) from the RE website. This method, replacing the former manual collection, will result in minor variation due to random errors. Where possible, the effects have been minimised, and should not be more prevalent than what was expected in previous Snapshots due to human error.

- 182 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress (1.2% of all rentals);
- 3,741 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on the minimum wage without placing them in housing stress (25.0% of all rentals).

For the regional and coastal areas targeted:

- 378 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress (12.3% of all rentals);
- 1,886 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress (61.4% of all rentals).

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Metropolitan Melbourne LGAs, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	13	0.1%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	3	<0.1%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	181	1.2%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	5	<0.1%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	1	<0.1%
6	Single	Age Pension	18	0.1%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	15	0.1%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	3	<0.1%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	3	<0.1%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	3	<0.1%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	3687	25.0%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	170	1.2%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	57	0.4%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	730	5.0%
Total No of Properties		14,728		

Table 2: Rental Affordability, regional and coastal LGAs, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	121	3.9%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	25	0.8%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	281	9.1%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	70	2.3%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	9	0.3%
6	Single	Age Pension	55	1.8%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	54	1.8%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	1747	56.9%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	469	15.3%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	139	4.5%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	900	29.3%
Total No of Properties		3,072		

Tables 1 and 2 provide a breakdown of rental affordability across a number of household and income types. These data demonstrate:

- For the majority of household and income types captured in the Victorian Snapshot, access to affordable and appropriate rentals was very poor or negligible. This is particularly the case for those living on any form of income support, who are essentially priced out of the private rental market, and are thus particularly vulnerable to housing and financial stress, and potential homelessness;
- Young people and young families living on the Newstart Allowance have little to no access to affordable/appropriate rentals in both metropolitan and regional areas. For these young people, there were only three affordable/appropriate rentals in metropolitan Melbourne (short stay boarding houses), and zero rentals across the regional/coastal locations;

- For families living on the Newstart Allowance with two children, only 13 rentals were affordable and appropriate across metropolitan Melbourne, and only 121 were available across the combined regional/coastal locations;
- For single parent families working and/or receiving income support, access to housing was very low; with less than 1% of all rentals found to be affordable and appropriate in metropolitan Melbourne for all income types. In regional/coastal Victoria, single families on the minimum wage/FTB had moderately higher access to rentals, at 15.3%;
- For families receiving a parenting payment together with the minimum wage, access to rentals was similarly limited, particularly in metropolitan Melbourne where only 5% of rentals were affordable and appropriate. This figure was higher however in regional/coastal Victoria, at 29.3%;
- For single people living on the Disability Support Pension (aged over 21), access to rentals was also very low, with only 15 listings advertised in all of metropolitan Melbourne, and 54 regionally.
- Families comprising two parents who both earn the minimum wage (with two children), could by far afford the greatest number of rentals. In metropolitan Melbourne this constituted 25% of all rentals advertised, whereas in regional/coastal areas this represented 56.9%. These families however, generally constitute a small proportion of Anglicare Victoria's and St Luke's typical service user groups. Further, the vast majority of these properties were located in the outer regions of Melbourne, in areas generally associated with higher level of socio-economic disadvantage.

Data for the five most affordable and least affordable LGAs in metropolitan Melbourne are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Most affordable and least affordable LGAs in metropolitan Melbourne (n=14,728)

MOST AFFORDABLE LGAS			LEAST AFFORDABLE LGAS		
LGA (n = total number of rental listings advertised per LGA)	Number of properties suitable for at least one household type living on INCOME SUPPORT	Number of properties suitable for at least one household type living on the MINIMUM WAGE	LGA (n = total number of rental listings advertised per LGA)	Number of properties suitable for at least one household type living on INCOME SUPPORT	Number of properties suitable for at least one household type living on the MINIMUM WAGE
City of Casey (n= 588)	1	447	City of Melbourne (n= 1811)	4	1
City of Wyndham (n=539)	3	391	City of Yarra (n=518)	0	2
City of Brimbank (n=585)	7	364	City of Port Philip (n=840)	1	1
City of Yarra Ranges (n=504)	3	317	City of Glen Eira (n=507)	2	8
City of Whittlesea (n=469)	1	229	City of Boroondara (n=663)	17	14

For the regional and coastal Snapshot, access to affordable and appropriate housing was relatively consistent across regions. Data for the larger regional catchments included in the Snapshot, and those particularly relevant to Anglicare Victoria and St Luke's services, are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Significant regional and coastal LGAs (n=3,072)

LGA <i>(n = total number of rental listings advertised per LGA)</i>	Number of properties suitable for at least one household type living on INCOME SUPPORT	Number of properties suitable for at least one household type living on the MINIMUM WAGE	LGA <i>(n = total number of rental listings advertised per LGA)</i>	Number of properties suitable for at least one household type living on INCOME SUPPORT	Number of properties suitable for at least one household type living on the MINIMUM WAGE
Greater Bendigo (n=348)	25	239	Latrobe and BawBaw (n=494)	173	359
Ballarat (n=528)	65	350	Mornington Peninsula (n=471)	8	191
Mt Alexander (n=103)	11	52	Greater Geelong (n=555)	58	319
Macedon Ranges (n=139)	2	60	Wodonga (n=130)	15	90

Discussion

Apart from two child, couple families, where both parents earn the minimum wage, all income and family groups included in this Snapshot have very little, or no access to the 17,800 total rental listings captured across Victoria. This is particularly so in metropolitan Melbourne, where the risk of being priced out of the market and entering severe rental stress is high across all LGAs.

The vast majority of affordable and appropriate rentals in metropolitan Melbourne (largely available for working families) are located in the outer suburban growth corridors, fringe areas, and semi-rural locations. These areas are typically associated with poorer access to services, public transport, infrastructure, employment, educational and training institutions, and higher levels of socioeconomic disadvantage. Improved access to affordable and appropriate rentals was also found in regional and coastal areas, where access to employment, education, infrastructure and health services can also be limited.

In contrast, the fewest affordable and appropriate rentals were located in the inner metropolitan areas of Melbourne. These suburbs typically have the highest concentration of wealth, transport options, infrastructure, and access to employment, educational opportunities, schools and health services, and arts/cultural activities. Conversely, inner city areas also have a particular high concentration of visible, and often entrenched

homelessness, such as people ‘living rough’ on the streets, and utilising emergency housing, material relief and food services on an ongoing basis. For example, the Melbourne ‘StreetCount2014’⁹⁵ found 142 people ‘sleeping rough’ in the CBD on 3rd June 2014. The 2011 Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) further estimated that 1,232 people were homeless on Census night in the City of Melbourne – including those living in boarding houses, improvised dwellings on the street and emergency housing, and staying temporarily with others⁹⁶. More broadly, Homelessness Australia (2013), drawing upon ABS and Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) data, report that 22,773 people are homeless across Victoria every night, representing 42.6 individuals per every 10,000.

Policy Implications

Lack of stable and affordable housing can significantly impact the safety, wellbeing, mental/physical health, and developmental outcomes experienced by the client groups supported by Anglicare Victoria’s and St Luke’s range of services. The following policy directions, informed by organisational knowledge, research and service experience, are provided below:

1. Action is needed to stem the number of young people exiting the out of home care (OOHC) system at 17 or 18 years of age into homelessness or insecure, transitional housing arrangements, with the highly inadequate Newstart Allowance as their major source of income support. Specifically, Anglicare Victoria urges Government to support young people to remain in funded OOHC until they are 21 years of age, consistent with the UK ‘Staying Put’⁹⁷ model. This should include access to housing, training, education and independent living skills, as a means of fostering improved life chances into adulthood, and minimising the potential for future homelessness, marginalisation, unemployment, substance use and contact with the criminal justice system.
2. It is imperative that the 2016 Federal Budget redress, rather than increase the disparity between the current levels of income assistance and the growing costs of living. Actions are needed to:
 - i. Index Rent Assistance in line with the cost of renting in the private market, and;
 - ii. Increase and streamline the Newstart Allowance, Youth Allowance and the Aged Pension to more adequately reflect the rising costs of living.

Whilst the costs associated with an ageing population will continue to raise challenges, reducing Government expenditure on social spending will only increase housing stress, and may only serve to further entrench marginalisation and poverty across generations.

3. Consistent with the broad directions of the 2012-2016 Council of Australian Governments (COAG) ‘National Affordable Housing Agreement’, Government leadership and investment in innovative social and/or community housing options is needed to provide both sustainable long-term, and shorter term housing for vulnerable members of the community. Action must be taken to curb sustained entry into the homelessness ‘cycle’; that is, ‘sleeping rough’, and utilisation of emergency housing, boarding houses, transitional housing, refuges, over-crowded dwellings, and other short-term arrangements, such as sleeping in cars and hotels (Homelessness in Victoria, 2013).

⁹⁵ City of Melbourne (2014), *StreetCount2014 – Final Report*. Melbourne City Council. Melbourne.

⁹⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012). *2011 Census of Population and Housing Estimating Homelessness*.

⁹⁷ Munro, E.R., Lushey, C., National Care and Advisory Service, Maskell-Graham, D., Ward, H. & Holmes, L. (2010). *Evaluation of the Staying Put: 18 Plus Family Placement Programme: Final report*. Centre for Child and Family Research at Loughborough University and the Department of Education, United Kingdom,

Conclusion

The development of strong, inclusive, healthy and safe communities requires, as a basic starting point, that we all have a stable, affordable, safe and comfortable place to live. Lack of affordable housing can lead to insecure and stressful living conditions, that can hinder good health, engagement in work and education, and the development of positive family relationships. An unaffordable rental market can also force individuals and families to:

- i. Spend more money than they can reasonably afford on rent, which can in turn cause substantial financial hardship, and the potential reliance on emergency relief services for basics such as food, and medical, utility and school expenses ('Affording the Basics' report, Anglicare Victoria, 2013) and;
- ii. May drive them to live in isolated areas with higher levels of social disadvantage.

The recent Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) report on 'Addressing Entrenched Disadvantage in Australia' (2015), strongly calls on Governments to immediately implement measures to address the growing disadvantage experienced by our most vulnerable communities. Addressing the issue of housing affordability, together with improving the ability of all citizens to participate in the economy to counter entrenched poverty (via access to employment, education and training, and early intervention services that address other realms of wellbeing), are integral parts of this call to action.

Snapshot: Anglicare Western NSW - Central West, Far West & Orana

Introduction

The Central West, Far West and Orana region covers a large regional and rural area of NSW. Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo and Broken Hill are the major service centres of the region, accounting for approximately half the region's population of 326 700.

The economy of the region is strengthened through a range of industry sectors including agriculture, mining and manufacturing as well as education and healthcare. Manufacturing plays a more significant role in the Central West than it does for NSW as a whole.

Charles Sturt University campuses are located in Bathurst and Orange and several TAFE Western campuses provide education opportunities. In the 2011 Census, the highest post school qualification held was most commonly a Certificate III or IV. The sector is also supported by the National Logistics Hub in Parkes and the intermodal facility in Blayney and Bathurst.

Housing prices are significantly cheaper in the Western region than those in metropolitan centres. The median weekly rent for people living in the Central West is \$180 per week, while people living in Far West and Orana region pay a median weekly rent of \$145 per week.

Major trends that affect the region include an ageing population, a shift to urban and coastal living, declining national productivity, accelerated global market intergeneration and climate change.

Anglicare Western NSW supports households on low incomes in Western NSW through a variety of services including the No Interest Loans Scheme (NILS), foster care and community and parish based emergency relief programs.

Findings

On the weekend of 11-12 April 2015, 1,065 private rentals were advertised for rent in Western NSW. Private rentals were surveyed from online sources⁹⁸. While a property could be affordable and appropriate for more than one household type, any individual property can only be rented out by one household type at any time. To this end, we found that:

- 185 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate for people living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress;
- 651 unique properties that were affordable and appropriate for people living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

⁹⁸ In 2015, a new data collection method was adopted where rental listings were retrieved and exported by realestate.com.au (RE) from the RE website. This method, replacing the former manual collection, will result in minor variation due to random errors. Where possible, the effects have been minimised, and should not be more prevalent than what was expected in previous Snapshots due to human error.

Households on income support

Comparing 2014 data to this year's snapshot, a significantly higher proportion of properties were captured this year (1065 up from 765) which is due to the inclusion this year of a larger area outside the major regional hubs of Bathurst, Orange, Dubbo and Mudgee. As a result, we have observed an increase in the proportion of affordable and appropriate rentals, as defined by the snapshot as less than 30 per cent of a person's income. However, a significant proportion of these properties are located in rural or remote areas and as a result may not be a realistic option for a household which is seeking employment or which doesn't have the resources or ability to drive long distances. Couples receiving the Age Pension had 126 suitable properties available across the region. Couples with two children both receiving Newstart had 57 suitable options, while a single person with one child on Newstart had only 5 suitable properties to choose from. Once again, single people on Newstart or Youth Allowance were by far the most disadvantaged groups in the snapshot with no affordable and appropriate properties despite the inclusion of smaller, less expensive areas this year.

While suitable properties were found for several of the households which depended on Government support, a large proportion were located in smaller regional towns. For an older person or couple, or a person with a disability, finding affordable housing in such a location may come at a cost of losing access to essential health and social supports. Meanwhile for a person or household seeking work or training opportunities, including and especially those with disabilities, these smaller towns may not be a suitable option and those with job-seeking obligations to Centrelink could even put their eligibility for payment at risk by moving to such a location.

Households on the minimum wage

The results for minimum wage households are significantly better than those captured in 2013. Families on a dual minimum wage income had 559 rental options (52.5 % compared with 28% in 2014)⁹⁹. Single parents had 145 suitable properties and single people had even fewer options with only 92 rental properties available.

A couple with two children receiving a parenting payment and one minimum wage had 253 suitable properties available across the region. However, not all of the properties affordable to low-waged households are in areas where jobs are likely to be easily accessible, and as public transport is less available in some regional areas this would necessitate the household to operate at least one vehicle.

⁹⁹ This year income level for this household type has been updated to reflect a more accurate income level, which resulted in an increase of around \$40 in maximum affordable rent per week compared to the previous calculation. This increase in household income has contributed to an improvement of housing affordability for these households.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Central West, Far West & Orana, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	57	5.4%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	23	2.2%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	126	11.8%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	37	3.5%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	5	0.5%
6	Single	Age Pension	40	3.8%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	15	1.4%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	559	52.5%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	145	13.6%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	92	8.6%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	253	23.8%
Total No of Properties		1,065		

Discussion

The results of the snapshot show that families receiving income support and earning the minimum wage have a larger variety of options in this market compared to other regions of NSW. However, a large number of these properties are in distant regional areas where employment, essential services and public transport may not be easily accessible. There has been a slight increase in affordable properties in the Orange area. However, there may be future economic problems owing to a large whitegoods manufacturer preparing to close in Orange by the end of 2016. With the current production already scaled back, job losses may have led to families relocating to areas with greater employment opportunities. The factory has been present in the community for more than 40 years and its closure will have ripple effects in other sectors including transport, retail, wholesale, hospitality and education as a result of declining purchases made by the company in the local economy and the ceased expenditure patterns of its employees.

Mining activity is expected to increase with subsequent job creation. Given the tendency of mines to employ fly-in, fly-out workers, whose income does not remain within the region, rental prices tend to increase due to higher competition. This causes high rental prices for average properties which results in artificially inflated market prices that are unaffordable for local residents.

Although the majority of available rental properties in this region are deemed to be affordable for families on minimum wages, there is not really sufficient employment in many areas for these housing opportunities to be realised. This picture of affordability and appropriateness is further complicated by the recognition of a poor public transport system, meaning that people need to budget for additional expenses to run and maintain a car, pay for community transport, or other means of transportation.

Of the household groups receiving income support, Aged Pensioner couples have more suitable options compared to last year (126 up from 62). Indexation every year has consequently increased the amount a household can affordably spend on rent from \$205 last year to \$209. However, many of the properties this household type could afford are located in small, rural towns which may not be equipped with the health and home care assistance an ageing couple may require, and the distant location would necessitate continued usage of a vehicle or create a risk of social isolation and danger for older people.

Young and single people on income support are severely impacted with virtually no appropriate housing stock and limited employment opportunities. They also face discrimination because of their age and lack of rental history. Unless a young person is earning a minimum wage they will not find any affordable or appropriate rental across the entire region and even on a minimum wage there are only 92 out of 1065 properties that are suitable. As a result, many young people migrate to more urban areas.

Other groups experiencing discrimination in the private rental market in the Central and Far West areas are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and single parents. Often they are forced to rent in the far more remote areas outside of the city centres which compromises their access to community, social and medical support services. Overcrowded dwellings are also an issue in Western NSW, representing one of the top five reasons for people seeking emergency accommodation.

Policy Implications

The housing affordability crisis is a severe issue facing regional communities. Multiple interventions are required at both State and Federal government levels to ensure that every individual and family has access to safe, affordable housing. Priorities must be made to increase the levels of benefits and income supplements and to accelerate social housing programs.

Anglicare Western NSW endorsed a response to the NSW State Government discussion paper on the future of social housing led by Anglicare Sydney, with several recommendations including:

- The NSW State Government appoint a dedicated Minister for Housing tasked with a portfolio to increase the supply of affordable housing and improve housing affordability;
- The NSW State Government increase the supply of supported housing to assist women and their children who are experiencing or at risk of domestic violence and/or entering the child protection system.

The inadequacy of Government Benefits is also highlighted through the snapshot findings. There is an immediate need for the NSW State Government to make representations to the Federal Government to:

- Increase Newstart by \$50 per week;
- Restore Single Parenting Payments to single parents whose youngest child has turned 8 years old until the child reaches 16 years;
- Increase the maximum rate of Commonwealth Rent Assistance by \$30 per fortnight and index the payment to any increase in market rent price.

Conclusion

Although affordable housing may be more readily available in rural parts of NSW, it is not always appropriate. The consequences of a housing shortage will cost a great deal to governments down the track, as they attempt to address poor educational outcomes for children and the breakdown of families and relationships.

For households trying to make ends meet without at least two minimum wage incomes, the housing stock for affordable and appropriate rentals in the Central West, Far West and Orana region is difficult to find.

The current rental market is clearly beyond the affordable price range of people on income support and the level of income received by people on benefits is only sufficient to pay for extremely cheap accommodation, which simply does not exist.

Snapshot: Anglicare Western Australia - Western Australia

Introduction

Anglicare WA works across Western Australia; predominantly in the greater metropolitan area of Perth, the South West and Great Southern, and the North West (Pilbara and Kimberley). It provides services that assist people to build relationships, secure affordable housing, and manage financial stress.

Anglicare WA believes it is not acceptable or necessary for any member of our community to be homeless. We strive to ensure that affordable, safe and secure housing for all becomes a fundamental social priority in our community. Every person needs quality, affordable and appropriate housing to get on with their lives.

On Friday 10 April, 2014 Anglicare WA ran a Rental Affordability Snapshot to survey available private rental properties. The survey examined online listings from realestate.com.au. Properties advertised were assessed in terms of affordability and appropriateness for a number of different household types and assumed incomes. Affordable rental was defined as 30% or less of a family or individual's gross income. This is a commonly used indicator of housing stress for low income households. Appropriateness was assessed on the number of bedrooms in a property (e.g. a single parent with one child would need a two bedroom property).

For a property to be considered suitable it was required to meet the tests of both affordability and appropriateness.

In 2015, a new data collection method was adopted where rental listings were retrieved and exported by realestate.com.au (RE) from the RE website. This method, replacing the former manual collection, will result in minor variation due to random errors. Where possible, the effects have been minimised, and should not be more prevalent than what was expected in previous Snapshots due to human error.

Findings

Data was collected on 9803 private rental listings found on realestate.com.au. This number is up 41% from 6975 private rental listings last April in 2014 and up 129% from 4272 properties in April of 2013. For the purposes of analysis the properties were grouped into three locations: (1) Greater Metropolitan Perth, including Mandurah, (2) South West and Great Southern (including Bunbury and Albany), and (3) the North West (including Pilbara and Kimberley).

GREATER METROPOLITAN PERTH, WA

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	1	0%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	0	0%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0%
6	Single	Age Pension	7	0%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	0	0%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	1666	21%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B (both adults)	10	0%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	10	0%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	68	1%
Total No of Properties		7976		

Discussion

The median rental in Perth was \$430 per week for all properties listed on realestate.com.au. This is down 10% from \$480 in April of 2014. Regardless of the decreasing median price of rental properties they are still not affordable for anyone on government benefits (0.1% affordable) with limited availability to low income earners (<25% affordable).

Government Benefits

In the entire greater Perth metropolitan region, only eight properties were available for anyone solely surviving on government benefits. These eight properties make up less than one per cent 0.1% of the total 7976 properties available on 10 April, 2015. This is very similar to 2014 results when six properties out of 5979 listings (0.1%) were available.

Of the eight available properties, one was appropriate for a couple with two children where both adults are on Newstart Allowance and seven were appropriate for a single person on the aged pension. Of note, the seven properties available were all in shared accommodation which may not always be appropriate for someone on the aged pension.

For all other single people on income support payments (including Newstart, Parenting Payment Single, Disability Support Pension, and Youth Allowance) no properties were affordable in Perth.

While seven properties were available for singles on the aged pension in shared accommodation there were zero properties that were both affordable and appropriate for a couple with no children on the aged pension.

Minimum Wage Earners

Low income earners, both singles and couples, were better off than those relying on government benefits. The best case scenario for low income earners in Perth is to be in a couple where both adults are earning minimum wage. In Perth there were 1666 affordable and appropriate properties available for couples with two children on minimum wage, making up 21% of available listings.

Single minimum wage earners with two children do not fare as well in today's rental market where there were only ten available properties (0.1% of available properties). Single minimum wage earners without children were in the same position with ten available properties. This is down 98% from 2014 when 34 properties (0.6%) were available for singles on minimum wage.

A couple where one adult is on minimum wage and they receive the partnered Parenting Payment and Family Tax Benefit A&B were slightly better off than singles on minimum wage alone as there were 68 properties (0.9% of listed properties) available to them.

SOUTH WEST & GREAT SOUTHERN REGIONS, WA

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	10	1%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	2	0%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	22	3%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	9	1%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	2	0%
6	Single	Age Pension	4	1%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	4	1%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	382	54%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	46	7%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	9	1%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	110	16%
Total No of Properties		702		

The median rental in Perth's Southwest and Great Southern Regions was \$370 per week, up 3% from \$360 in April 2014. Private rental listings increased by 36% to 702 listings this April, 2015 from 517 listed in April, 2014 yet are still largely unaffordable for those on government benefits.

Government Benefits

Overall, the availability of suitable private rentals for people on government benefits across the south of Western Australia was very low. Similar to the trend in the greater Perth metropolitan region, singles and couples on government benefits do not have a lot of affordable options in private rentals to choose from with only 30 properties available (4.3% of total properties) across the Great Southern and South West.

For single people on Newstart or the Youth Allowance no properties were affordable including listed shared accommodation.

Only two properties were available for singles with one child on Newstart Allowance (0.3%) and merely ten properties (1.4%) were affordable for couples with two children where both adults were on Newstart Allowance.

Singles with one child on Parenting Payment fared only slightly better than singles with two children on Parenting Payment with nine properties (1.3%) compared to two properties (0.3%) being affordable.

Four properties (0.6%) were available for singles on both Age Pension and Disability support Pensions; unfortunately these were the same four properties.

Other household types on pensions or benefits were competing for a very small number of properties. Couples on Age Pension could afford the most properties (22 or 3.1%).

Minimum Wage Earners

Minimum wage earners had the greatest amount of options in the south of Western Australia. Over half, 54% or 382 properties, of the listed private rentals on realestate.com.au were affordable for families with two children where both parents were on a minimum wage. These families are able to pay up to \$400 per week and not be in rental stress (paying more than 30% of income on rent).

Singles with children on minimum wage and Family Tax Benefit (FTB) A and B were more limited in private rental options such that only 46 properties (6.6%) were affordable whereas couples with children where one adult on minimum wage, FTB A and B and a partnered parenting payment was being received could afford 110 properties (15.7%).

A paltry nine properties, making 1.3% of available private rentals, were affordable for a single person on minimum wage.

NORTH WEST REGION, WA

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	1	0%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	1	0%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	2	0%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	0	0%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	0	0%
6	Single	Age Pension	0	0%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	0	0%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	77	7%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B (both adults)	4	0%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	0	0%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	21	2%
Total No of Properties		1125		

The median rental price in Perth's North West Region was \$600 per week, down 14% from \$700 in April 2014. Private rental listings increased by 135% to 1125 listings this April, 2015 from 479 listed in April, 2014 yet are still largely unaffordable for those on government benefits or minimum wage earners.

Government Benefits

Overall, the availability of private rental that was both appropriate and affordable for anyone on government benefits was less than one per cent of listed properties (0.4%). Only four properties were affordable to anyone on any benefits or allowance. One property (0.1%) was available for a couple with two children where both adults were receiving Newstart Allowance. The same property was also suitable for a single person with two children receiving Parenting Payment. There were two suitable properties (0.2%) for a couple on the Age Pension with no children.

This trend is reflective of the overall housing situation in resource based communities in Western Australia. Not only does the North West Region have the highest median private rental price across Western Australia but it also has the least availability of affordable houses for those on benefits or low incomes.

Minimum Wage Earners

Unlike the other regions tested in WA, private rental affordability is not much more accessible for minimum wage earners. Families where both adults are on minimum wage have the most options in the North West with 77 properties available, yet this only makes up seven per cent of total listed properties.

There were 21 private rentals (1.9%) available to families on minimum wage along with Parenting Payment and FTB A&B. The situation is even direr for singles with children on minimum wage and FTB A&B but without the Parenting Payment with only four properties (0.4%) available. This decreases to no properties (0.0%) affordable for minimum wage earning singles without children.

Policy Implications

Anglicare WA maintains that multiple interventions are required at Federal, State and Local Government levels to ease the pressure on the rental market. **Increasing the levels of benefits and accelerating investment in social and affordable housing programs should be priorities.**

Priority must be given to:

- decreasing the long waiting lists for public housing for low income earners
- the sustainable development of affordable housing
- recognition that low income earners are socially excluded due to lack of affordable housing

These are not novel solutions. They have been identified and required for years. Now they must be acted upon.

The current rental market in Western Australia is clearly beyond the affordable price range of people on benefits, pensions or a minimum wage. The level of income received by people on pensions and benefits is only sufficient to pay for extremely cheap accommodation, which simply does not exist. In particular the benefits paid through Newstart and the Youth Allowance are grossly inadequate.

The first and most obvious solution is to **increase the level of Newstart and the Youth Allowance so that recipients of these can access housing.** We have established in this year's Rental Affordability Snapshot (2015) that there were less than two per cent of private rentals available to these groups and those properties were largely located in the South West and Great Southern Regions of WA. This level of structural discrimination should not be tolerated and increases to the Newstart and Youth Allowance benefits are required to enable low income earners access to private rentals.

The Commonwealth Rental Assistance (CRA) supplement provides a valuable subsidy that can increase the amount of affordable housing available to low income earners. However, it has not kept pace with the rising cost of rent in Western Australia.

CRA needs to be immediately increased for all eligible recipients and revised to provide recognition for locational differences in private rental markets. As CRA is not regionally calculated it has limited efficacy in high cost areas and, as has already been established, a significant proportion of Western Australia is high cost.

The National Rental Affordability Scheme (NRAS) provided a Commonwealth commitment to increase the supply of affordable rental properties by 50,000 nationally.

The scheme subsidises affordable housing through tax credits as long as the housing is leased to eligible households at 20% below market rent.

After a relatively modest uptake NRAS appears now to be providing a significant incentive for the delivery of affordable housing in Western Australia. It remains overly complex and program requirements create barriers to access for vulnerable people. Anglicare WA believes that NRAS should be expanded and simplified to improve access.

Commonwealth and State Governments must, as a priority, allocate additional expenditure for the construction of affordable housing. There needs to be recognition that for many families and individuals home ownership is not a present option and the decline in public housing construction over the last two decades is having a major impact on availability of affordable housing.

A bipartisan commitment to significantly increase investment in appropriate public housing stock over the next ten years is urgently required if we want to make serious inroads into this fundamental social and community issue. Ensuring that 5% total housing stock is social housing by 2025 is a plausible target.

The current processes of taxation review need to ensure that in a tight fiscal environment, the focus is on ensuring an increase in new affordable housing stock. This includes reviewing Negative Gearing, Capital Gains Tax, First Home Owners Grants and Land Tax and Stamp Duty.

In addition, there is a growing need for support services to ensure that people who have access to housing are able to maintain it. Anglicare WA and other community service organisations provide services that support families and individuals in housing, financial and relationship stress.

For each of these groups it is critical that their existing housing is stable to prevent them sliding to less affordable or appropriate housing. The provision of support services provides a valuable buffer against such shifts. **Secure funding is required for support services to be maintained.**

The organisations delivering these services are also well placed to embrace the innovation and collaboration required to find sustainable solutions. It is essential that they receive the financial support required to undertake this work.

A significant component of the NPAH suite of services has been the inclusion of brokerage funds, or “flexible funding” to enhance positive outcomes for people engaged with Support Services. These funds have been used to contribute to the clearance of existing debt and to provide material assistance which supports the maintenance of tenancies. The funds enable people to address one off difficulties that would otherwise threaten their tenancies and have proven to be invaluable in preventing or addressing homelessness. Anglicare WA believes **an increase in funds for brokerage is essential to prevent people and families from sliding to less affordable or appropriate housing.**

Additionally there is a pressing need to **provide support to those families transitioning to private rental.**

Conclusion

The implications of unaffordable housing in Western Australia are greatly concerning. A home is critical to the well-being of people and their life and employment opportunities. The consequences of a housing shortage will cost a great deal to governments down the track, as they attempt to address poor educational outcomes for children and the breakdown of families and relationships.

Multiple interventions are required at both State and Federal government levels. Priorities must be made to increase the levels of benefits and income supplements and to accelerate social housing programs. The Western Australian State Affordable Housing Strategy is a good way forward, but it requires additional resources to make an impact in the critical next five years.

Anglicare WA believes that a comprehensive national strategy, ranging across Commonwealth, State and Local Government, is required to ensure that every individual and family has access to safe, affordable housing.

We further believe that a Commonwealth Minister for Housing is the appropriate office to hold responsibility for such a strategy.

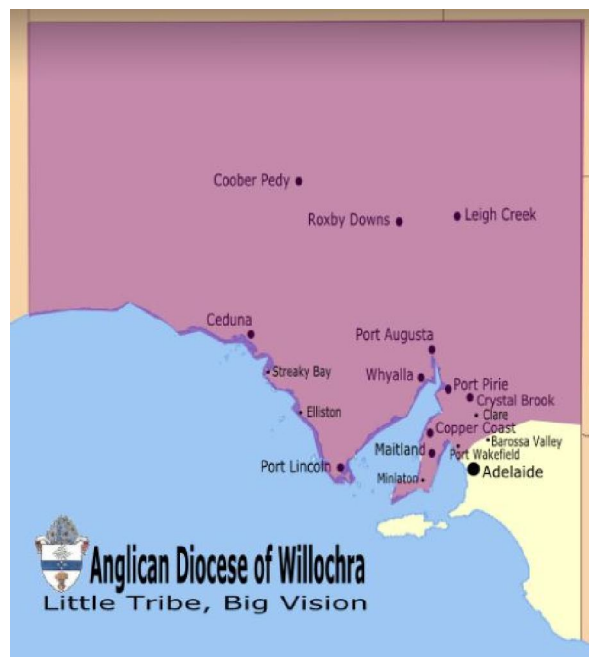
Snapshot: Anglicare Willochra - Willochra region

Introduction

Anglicare Willochra is part of the Anglican Diocese of Willochra, a large rural diocese covering 900,000 square kilometres of rural and regional South Australia. Anglicare Willochra is the part of the Anglican Diocese of Willochra specifically directed to fulfil the call of God to respond to human need by loving service to seek to transform unjust structures of society.

Anglicare Willochra works with communities and churches in the Diocese of Willochra to help identify needs and issues and develop appropriate responses to suffering and disadvantage. We do this through particular focus on:

- Reconciliation
- Community Outreach and Engagement
- Nurturing Servant Leadership
- Local Advocacy
- Social Justice in Partnership



Findings

On 11 April 2015, 616 private rentals were advertised for rent on realestate.com.au across the localities of the Diocese of Willochra. Private rentals were surveyed from newspapers and online sources¹⁰⁰. While a property could be affordable and appropriate for more than one household type, any individual property can only be rented out by one household type at any time. To this end, we found that:

- 174 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on income support payments without placing them in housing stress;
- 462 individual properties were suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress.

While these figures appear encouraging, with approximately 1/3 of properties rated as affordable for a household living on income support, it is useful to look closer to determine whether properties are available in the places where they are required, i.e. in places where there are opportunities for employment and services. We have therefore focused on two areas in particular, the regional city of Whyalla and the 'Copper Coast' comprising the rural townships of Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta.

¹⁰⁰ In 2015, a new data collection method was adopted where rental listings were retrieved and exported by realestate.com.au (RE) from the RE website. This method, replacing the former manual collection, will result in minor variation due to random errors. Where possible, the effects have been minimised, and should not be more prevalent than what was expected in previous Snapshots due to human error.

Table 1: Number and Percentage of Affordable & Appropriate Properties by Household Type & Locality

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Willochra		Copper Coast		Whyalla	
			#	%	#	%	#	%
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	74	12.0%	11	14.9%	15	8.5%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	22	3.6%	4	5.4%	5	2.8%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	122	19.8%	13	17.6%	33	18.6%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	44	7.1%	2	2.7%	15	8.5%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	3	0.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
6	Single	Age Pension	11	1.8%	0	0.0%	1	0.6%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	11	1.8%	0	0.0%	1	0.6%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	415	67.4%	57	77.0%	119	67.2%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B	190	30.8%	37	50.0%	38	21.5%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	47	7.6%	3	4.1%	7	4.0%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	280	45.5%	45	60.8%	65	36.7%
Total Number of Properties Surveyed			616		74		177	
Median Rent			\$260		\$250		\$280	

Whyalla

Whyalla is located on the Spencer Gulf in South Australia and has a population of 22,716 [ABS 2011 Census]. Primarily Whyalla's economy has been founded upon manufacturing; however this has diversified in recent years with the availability of fly in-fly out mining employment.

Whyalla's unemployment rate at the time of the 2011 ABS census was 8.2% which is twice the national average. The most significant populations affected are people who identified as Aboriginal 28.2%, youth 18.4% and people with disabilities 14.8%. All of these figures were significantly higher than the SA average. Whyalla has a 'split' economy with mining employees and professionals earning above average wages, and a significant number of people receiving government allowance or on minimum wage. This gives an indication of 'average' income for Whyalla which is not reflective of the reality.

Anglicare Willochra provides emergency and food relief for families and individuals seeking assistance. Whyalla is home to a total of 8,938 households, including 2,928 single person households, 233 group households and 5,777 family households. These households on average have 2.3 people.

Compared to Australia as a whole, Whyalla has a larger proportion of disadvantaged population. There are:

- 759 single parent families with a child under 15 years (100% above national average);
- 537 jobless families, and those families contained 980 children (70% above national average);
- 604 families included female sole parent pensioners (104% above national average);
- 1498 people received Disability Support pensions (83% above national average);
- 257 households suffering mortgage stress;
- 805 households suffering rental stress;
- 1889 households lived in public housing dwellings.

On the snapshot weekend, 177 private rentals were advertised for rent in Whyalla, with 43 individual properties suitable for at least one household type living on income support and 126 individual properties suitable for at least one household type living on minimum wage without placing them in housing stress. While the figures do not look too grim on its own, Whyalla's 'split economy' may mean that these suitable housing would more likely be rented by those who are more financially capable, rather than those who need it most. Variations in employment opportunities and inadequate availability of social housing entrap people in a cycle of poverty.

Copper Coast

The Copper Coast includes the three urban centres of Kadina, Wallaroo and Moonta and has a population of 12,947 [ABS 2011 Census]. The economy is predominantly based in the agriculture sector including bulk grain handling and agricultural manufacturing. Other industries include extraction, fishing, transport and business and service infrastructure. The unemployment rate for the Copper Coast is higher than the national average at 6.7%.

These are some of the characteristics of households in Copper Coast. There are:

- A total of 5,353 households, including 1,574 single person households, 127 group households and 3,652 family households. The average household size is 2.2 person;
- 391 single parent families with a child under 15 years;
- 9% households report that their rent payments are 30% or more of household income.

There are 74 rentals surveyed in Copper Coast for the snapshot but none were available for single people living on an income support payment such as Youth Allowance, Newstart or Disability support payment.

This snapshot indicates that the trend towards lack of affordable housing that is apparent in national and metropolitan locations is also present in regional and rural Australia. Individuals and families in rural and regional areas are then impacted further with lower levels of access to services, little public transport with increased distance and isolation, and reduced opportunities for employment increasing their exposure to poverty.

Policy Implications

Anglicare Willochra advocates for housing affordability especially in Whyalla and Copper Coast which has a large proportion of disadvantaged families. In this regard, a core policy focus should be addressing the barriers to affordable housing that exist due to inadequate income support payments.

Further, that the Commonwealth Rent Assistance (CRA) payment which seeks to aid housing affordability should be reviewed and reformed to keep pace with the changing costs relating to housing.

Finally, that policy mechanisms to support and revitalise the employment opportunities in rural Australia should be revisited.

Snapshot: The Samaritans Foundation- Central Coast, Hunter, Great Lakes & Taree

Introduction

Samaritans Foundation is the social welfare arm of the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle, currently providing over 170 community services throughout the Central Coast, Hunter, mid-North Coast and Western District regions of NSW.

The 2015 Samaritans Rental Affordability Snapshot surveyed properties in eleven local government areas across the Central Coast, Newcastle, Hunter Valley, Port Stephens, Great Lakes and Taree regions. The combined total population of these regions is 1,013,277 (ABS 2012).

Samaritans collected information on all properties advertised for rent across the identified regions on Saturday 11th April 2015. This included rooms available in share houses. The information was gathered from websites www.realestate.com and www.gumtree.com as well as the Newcastle Herald.

The properties advertised were assessed on the basis of whether they were affordable and appropriate for people living on low incomes.

Findings

Samaritans collected data on 4,107 rental listings across the eleven LGAs. This number is an increase of 16% (N=654) on rental properties surveyed in the 2014 Snapshot and is largely due to the inclusion of data collected from the Gumtree website in this year's survey.

The highest number of rental listings was 1154 for the Newcastle area, a 65% increase on the number for 2014, and the lowest number of rental listings was in the Great Lakes area with 102 properties, a 5% increase.

Singleton, the Upper Hunter and Taree had a decrease in the number of properties advertised yet all three regions had plenty of affordable and appropriate rental properties for families on minimum wage, or couples on the Aged Pension.

Of the 4,107 properties for private rental across the eleven LGAs, 10% (N=442) were identified that satisfied the criteria for affordability and appropriateness for people on some type of income support payment.

Families on minimum wage had the greatest number of options in all LGAs ranging from 10% (N=51) of all properties listed in Gosford to 62% (N=181) of properties listed in the Upper Hunter that were affordable and appropriate.

Singles

In 9 of the 11 LGAs there are no affordable or appropriate rental properties for:

- A Single person on Newstart Allowance;
- A Single person in a share house on Youth Allowance;
- A Single person over 18 years receiving Youth Allowance.

In Cessnock and Singleton LGAs there was only 1 or 2 rental properties that were affordable and appropriate for these household types.

A single person over 21 years receiving a Disability Support Pension in the Upper Hunter region can choose from 16 (5%) affordable and appropriate properties and in Newcastle there is 15 (1%) properties available for this income support type.

Of the total number of listed rentals 1.8% were affordable and appropriate for single people on the Aged Pension. The highest number of rentals for this group was recorded in the Newcastle 2% (N=24) and Upper Hunter 7% (N=19) regions.

Singles on minimum wage could afford a higher proportion of the rentals across all LGAs (5.2%) with the greatest number of listings in the Newcastle area (N=60) and the lowest number in Gosford (N=3).

Single Parent families

Gosford, Newcastle, Maitland, and Port Stephens areas had no listings appropriate or affordable for single parents receiving any income support payment type.

Single parents with income support payments in the other eight LGAs found between 1% and 3% of listings affordable and appropriate, with the Upper Hunter region reporting 11% of rentals appropriate and affordable for single parents with a child less than 5yrs.

The Upper Hunter had the highest number of listings (25% of rentals in that area) affordable and appropriate for Single parents with two children on minimum wage. There were no listings for this income type in the Central Coast and Newcastle regions.

Couple families

A total of eight LGAs had no affordable and appropriate rental properties for a couple with two children on Newstart allowance. Affordable and appropriate listings for this income support type in the other three LGAs ranged from 2% in Taree to 9% in the Upper Hunter region.

Couples with two dependents on the minimum wage were the family type and income group that could find the highest amount of affordable and appropriate rentals across all LGAs, although these were lower in the LGAs of Gosford, Newcastle, Wyong, Lake Macquarie (10%-29%) than in the LGAs of the Hunter, Great Lakes, Port Stephens, and Upper Hunter regions–(39%-67%).

Of the total number of listed rentals across all LGAs, 5.6% were affordable and appropriate for couples without dependents on the Aged Pension. Surprisingly only 1% of the total listings in the Port Stephens LGA – an area typically populated with retirees – were affordable and appropriate for this income support type.

Couples with two dependents on minimum wage and receiving Partnered Parenting payment could find more affordable and appropriate rentals in regional and rural LGAs (Upper Hunter 44%) than coastal LGAs (Newcastle 0%).

The findings are summarised in the table below.

Table 1: Rental Affordability, Central Coast, Hunter, Great lakes & Taree, by household type and percentage

#	Household Type	Payment Type	Number Affordable & Appropriate	Percentage Affordable & Appropriate
1	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Newstart Allowance (both adults)	33	0.8%
2	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Parenting Payment Single	6	0.1%
3	Couple, no children	Age Pension	228	5.6%
4	Single, one child (aged less than 5)	Parenting Payment Single	46	1.1%
5	Single, one child (aged over 8)	Newstart Allowance	11	0.3%
6	Single	Age Pension	75	1.8%
7	Single aged over 21	Disability Support Pension	40	1.0%
8	Single	Newstart Allowance	1	<0.1%
9	Single aged over 18	Youth Allowance	1	<0.1%
10	Single in share house	Youth Allowance	1	<0.1%
11	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A (both adults)	1212	29.5%
12	Single, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + FTB A & B (both adults)	135	3.3%
13	Single	Minimum Wage	212	5.2%
14	Couple, two children (one aged less than 5, one aged less than 10)	Minimum Wage + Parenting payment (partnered) + FTB A & B	310	7.5%
Total No of Properties		4,107		

Discussion

During 2014 unemployment in the Hunter region more than doubled, from 4% to 8.2%. This sharp increase has been largely due to the downturn in mining investment and a decline in demand for mining resources. Employment has also been significantly reduced in the subsidiary industries of construction and manufacturing. Samaritans Financial Counsellors in the Upper Hunter have received an increased number of referrals for families disadvantaged through this downturn.

This weakening of the Hunter's economy has had an effect on the housing sector with private rental properties in many areas of the Hunter Valley being offered at reduced rents. Many regions that have traditionally relied upon the mining sector now have limited employment opportunities and are experiencing a decrease in population as people move away to seek jobs elsewhere. As a result, landlords have greatly reduced rental prices making these

properties more affordable. Yet with limited employment opportunities this supply of affordable housing does not match the household types that need it.

Youth unemployment continues to be a major issue with around one-in-five wanting a job in the Hunter in January 2015 that could not find one. With few employment opportunities and virtually no appropriate affordable housing stock, young people often resort to couch surfing, share rooms or seeking support from our homelessness services. The Snapshot shows that only single people on minimum wage can find appropriate affordable housing across the entire region.

Independent living is a standard that is sought by most people in our community, yet this Snapshot clearly shows this option is not available to those who are the most vulnerable. Families relying on income support were largely excluded from the private rental market across most regions. Samaritans emergency services are constantly filled with people from these household types seeking assistance with bills and food.

Those earning a minimum wage, both single people and parents, are much better off for rental housing stock.

Policy Implications

Government allowances such as Youth Allowance and Newstart are insufficient for young people or single parent families to afford a level of housing that is appropriate and affordable. An increase in the rates of these allowances in line with the rising cost of living and renting in the private rental market would make a difference to these groups.

Increase the supply of affordable appropriate and stable accommodation for low income earners through partnerships between government and the community sector.

Governments should develop incentives for assist small to medium businesses to activate more employment in this sector to provide greater opportunities for employment for young people.

Conclusion

Whilst there were more private rental properties surveyed in 2015, there has been relatively little change compared to previous years in the affordable appropriate properties available to people on income support.

Unless you are a single person or a couple with a family earning the minimum wage, the private rental market is virtually out of reach for people receiving a government payment in the Central Coast, Hunter, Port Stephens, Great Lakes and Taree regions.

Appendix 1: Assumptions of Affordability & Appropriateness

Assumptions used when calculating affordability and appropriateness

The measure of **affordability** that we use is the 'housing stress' benchmark – i.e. if the household is paying more than 30% of its income in rent, then it is in 'housing stress' and the housing is deemed to be unaffordable.

We include rent assistance as income for the purposes of this calculation.

When going through the listings on the internet and in the paper to assess whether they are affordable, we apply the following assumptions:

- Where rents are banded (e.g. the property is advertised as renting at \$200-\$220 per week), we use the highest rent in the band (e.g.\$220)¹⁰¹.
- Where rents are listed as 'from \$x' or 'offers above \$x' or '\$x negotiable', we use the figure given (\$x).
- Where rents are not stated in the ad, we assume that these properties would be too expensive.
- Where multiple properties are advertised in the same ad (e.g. 2 rooms available in the one share house), we count them as separate properties.
- When it is not clear from the ad how many properties are available (e.g. an ad for 'seniors' units') – in these cases, we count them as two properties.
- Where a property lists a condition of renting such as child minding or other 'employment' type activities, the property is not included.

In determining whether the property is **appropriate**, we apply the following assumptions:

- A bedroom property is suitable for a family with one child, while a family with 2 children would require a 3 bedroom property
- Share houses and bed-sits/studios are not suitable for couples; the exception is for couples on the age pension (assumption we have adopted in the past but not stipulated).

In order for the property to be considered suitable for a household,
it has to be affordable and appropriate.

¹⁰¹ In 2015, a new data collection method was adopted where rental listings were retrieved and exported by realestate.com.au (RE) from the RE website. This method, replacing the former manual collection, will result in minor variation due to random errors, for example, instead of the highest rents being captured from the rents that were banded, the median or the lower band might have been picked up by the system. Where possible the effect has been minimised and should not be more prevalent than what was expected in previous Snapshots due to human error. These errors should be rectified for Snapshot 2016.